



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

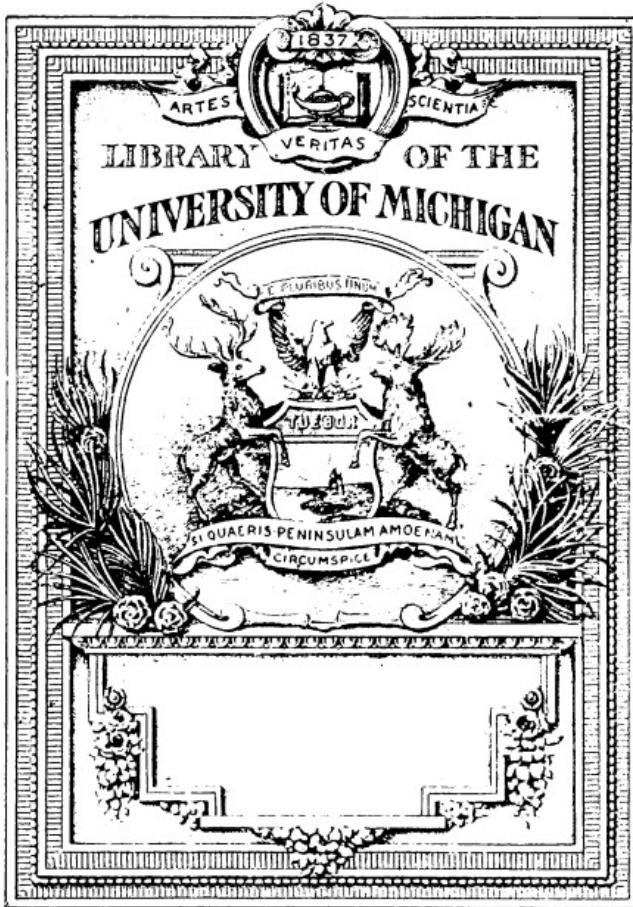
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

GRAMS  
PAPER  
TERS

R

96  
8

2



N  
6796  
.C98





THE LIVES  
OF  
THE MOST EMINENT  
BRITISH  
PAINTERS, SCULPTORS,  
AND  
ARCHITECTS.

---

BY ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

---

SECOND EDITION.

VOL. II.

---

LONDON:  
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

MDCCXXX.

**LONDON :**  
**PRINTED BY C. ROWORTH, BELL YARD,**  
**TEMPLE BAR.**

## CONTENTS

OF

VOL. II.

---

	PAGE
BENJAMIN WEST . . . . .	1
JAMES BARRY . . . . .	60
WILLIAM BLAKE . . . . .	143
JOHN OPIE . . . . .	189
GEORGE MORLAND . . . . .	222
EDWARD BIRD . . . . .	251
HENRY FUSELI . . . . .	269

---

\* \* \* The Engraved Heads precede the respective Lives.



LIVES  
OF  
THE BRITISH PAINTERS.

---

---

BENJAMIN WEST.

---

THE life of West has been written by the ingenious author of “Annals of the Parish,” with such minuteness of research and general accuracy of information, that little may seem to be left for a new biographer, but to re-model his narrative, correct some dates, and add a few anecdotes. Something more, however, is necessary. He who writes the biography of any living person, is fettered much even as to matters of fact—much more in his expression of feelings and opinions—and not only was the President alive when Mr. Galt composed his memoir, but they were intimate friends.

John West, the father of Benjamin, was of that family settled at Long-Crendon, in Buckinghamshire, which produced Colonel James West, the friend and companion in arms of John Hampden. Upon one occasion, in the course of a conversation in Buckingham Palace, respecting his picture of

the Institution of the Garter, West happened to make some allusion to his English descent; when the Marquis of Buckingham, to the manifest pleasure of the late King, declared that the Wests of Long-Crendon were undoubted descendants of the Lord Delaware, renowned in the wars of Edward the Third and the Black Prince, and that the artist's likeness had therefore a right to a place amongst those of the nobles and warriors in his historical picture.

The warlike propensities of this branch of the race had been long extinguished; in 1667 they had embraced the peaceful tenets of the Quakers, and emigrated to America with some other families desirous of escaping from the contests and distractions of their native isle. John West remained behind only till his education was completed at the Quakers' Seminary at Uxbridge: he then followed his family to Philadelphia—married Sarah Pearson, (whose grandfather was the confidential friend of William Penn, and aided him in founding the state of Pennsylvania)—and settled at Springfield in that province. One part of the marriage portion of his wife was a negro slave, an affectionate and faithful creature; but in his intercourse, as a merchant, with Barbadoes, John West happened to witness the cruelties to which certain unhappy Africans were subjected, and—touched in conscience—the worthy Quaker liberated his bondsman and retained him as a hired servant. Others of the Society of Friends followed his example—the charitable feeling spread far and wide—it was privately taught and publicly preached, and finally established as one of the tenets of that people,

that no person could remain a member of their community who held a human creature in slavery.

When Mrs. West, already the mother of nine children, was again about to be confined, she went to hear one Edward Peckover preach in the fields near her residence. The subject which he chose was popular with such an audience—the corrupt and degraded condition of the Old World—the pure morality and flourishing establishments of the New. The language of the preacher was vehement and inflammatory. He pictured the licentious manners and atheistical principles of France, and the love of sordid gain which stained the character of England ; and declared that the day and the hour were at hand, when those countries would be desolated with the tempest of God's vengeance—the mass of the atheists and money-changers swallowed up—and the terrified remnant compelled to seek refuge in happy America. The pains of premature labour came upon Mrs. West during this terrible sermon—she shrieked out—the women formed a circle round her, and carried her from the field ; and such was her agitation of mind, that she had nearly expired before she reached her own house. She continued dangerously ill for twelve days, when, on October 10th, 1738, she was safely delivered of her youngest son, Benjamin.

This made some impression on the mind of John West, and as the presumption of man generally interprets such occurrences in his own favour, he imagined that something more than common was indicated for the fortunes of the child. Peckover, glad, no doubt, to find that his wild sermon instead of rebuke brought praise, warmly supported the

belief of the credulous Quaker, and desired him to watch over his son with more than ordinary solicitude. "For a child," said he, "sent into the world under such remarkable circumstances, will assuredly prove a wonderful man." One lucky prediction establishes the fame of the prophet, but there are thousands on whose future fame friends and parents fondly reckoned, in whose favour "remarkable circumstances" too condescended to occur, and who remain inglorious in spite of the stars.

From one, thus ushered into life by sermon and prophecy, much was looked for. Nothing, however, happened till his seventh year, when little Benjamin was placed with a fly-flap in his hand to watch the sleeping infant of his eldest sister, while his mother gathered flowers in the garden. As he sat by the cradle, the child smiled in sleep; he was struck with its beauty, and seeking some paper, drew its portrait in red and black ink. His mother returned, and snatching the paper, which he sought to conceal, exclaimed to her daughter, "I declare he has made a likeness of little Sally!" She took him in her arms and kissed him fondly. The drawing was shown to her husband, the prediction of Peckover recurred to his fancy, and he expressed his belief that the boy would become some day very eminent. If he meant as an artist, how this was to come to pass must have seemed, however, not so clear: there were neither professors, paintings, nor prints, amongst the primitives of Pennsylvania.

Yet West was born amidst circumstances not unfavourable to the development of his powers.

The benevolent fraternity of Quakers had that simplicity of manners, and that serenity of look which artists love; while around them the nations of Europe had scattered their children as thick as the trees of the forest. The gay Frenchman, the plodding Dutchman, the energetic Englishman, and the laborious Scot—all were there, each emblazoned with the peculiarities, and speaking the peculiar language of his native soil. The wilderness, too, had its picturesque tribes, who presented a school of nature for the study of the naked figure; and it appears that West was early aware of some of these advantages.

When he was some eight years old, a party of roaming Indians paid their summer visit to Springfield, and were much pleased with the rude sketches which the boy had made of birds, and fruits, and flowers, for in such drawings many of the wild Americans have both taste and skill. They showed him some of their own workmanship, and taught him how to prepare the red and yellow colours with which they stained their weapons; to these his mother added indigo, and thus he was possessed of the three primary colours. The Indians, unwilling to leave such a boy in ignorance of their other acquirements, taught him archery, in which he became expert enough to shoot refractory birds, which refused to come on milder terms for their likenesses. The future President of the British Academy, taking lessons in painting and in archery, from a tribe of Cherokees, might be a subject worthy of the pencil.

The wants of West increased with his knowledge. He could draw, and he had obtained

colours, but how to lay those colours skilfully on, he could not well conceive. A neighbour informed him that this was done with brushes formed of camels' hair; there were no camels in America, and he had recourse to the cat, from whose back and tail he supplied his wants. The cat was a favourite, and the altered condition of her fur was imputed to disease, till the boy's confession explained the cause, much to the amusement of his father, who nevertheless rebuked him, but more in affection than in anger. Better help was at hand. One Pennington, a merchant, was so much pleased with the sketches of his cousin Benjamin, that he sent him a box of paints and pencils, with canvas prepared for the easel, and six engravings by Grevling. West placed the box on a chair at his bedside, and was unable to sleep. He rose with the dawn, carried his canvas and colours to the garret, hung up the engravings, prepared a palette, and commenced copying. So completely was he under the controul of this species of enchantment, that he absented himself from school, laboured secretly and incessantly, and without interruption for several days, when the anxious inquiries of the schoolmaster introduced his mother to his *studio*, with no pleasure in her looks. But her anger subsided as she looked upon his performance. He had avoided copyism, and made a picture composed from two of the engravings, telling a new story, and coloured with a skill and effect which was in her sight surprizing. "She kissed him," says Galt, who had the story from the artist, "with transports of affection, and assured him that she would not only intercede with

his father to pardon him for having absented himself from school, but would go herself to the master and beg that he might not be punished. Sixty-seven years afterwards the writer of these memoirs had the gratification to see this piece in the same room with the sublime painting of Christ Rejected, on which occasion the painter declared to him that there were inventive touches of art in his first and juvenile essay, which, with all his subsequent knowledge and experience, he had not been able to surpass." A similar story is related of Canova—he visited his native place after having risen into eminence, looked earnestly on the performances of his youth, and said, sorrowfully, "I have been *walking* but not *climbing*."

In the ninth year of his age he accompanied his relative Pennington to Philadelphia, and executed a view of the banks of the river, which pleased a painter, by name Williams, at that time residing there. This man's works—the first specimens of true art that the boy had seen—affected West so much that he burst into tears. The artist was surprised, and declared, like Peckover, that Benjamin would be a remarkable man. "What books do you read?" said Williams; "you should read the lives of great men." "I read the Bible and the Testament," replied West; "and I know the history of Adam, and Joseph, and Moses, and David, and Solomon, and the Apostles." "You are a fine boy," said the other, "and ought to be encouraged. I shall send you two books, which you will like much." He sent him, accordingly, Du Fresnoy and Richardson, with an invitation to call, whenever he pleased, and see his pictures.

The books and the pictures made the love of art overcome all other feelings, and he returned home, resolved to become a painter. John West was struck with the growing intelligence and expanding mind of his son ; his sketches and drawings were now openly encouraged, and that he was destined to be a great artist grew more and more the opinion of the family.

One of his school-fellows allured him on a half-holiday from trap and ball, by promising him a ride to a neighbouring plantation. "Here is the horse, bridled and saddled," said his friend, "so come, get up behind me." "Behind you!" said Benjamin; "I will ride behind nobody." "Oh, very well," replied the other, "I will ride behind you, so mount." He mounted accordingly, and away they rode. "This is the last ride I shall have," said his companion, "for some time. To-morrow I am to be apprenticed to a tailor." "A tailor!" exclaimed West; "you will surely never be a tailor?" "Indeed but I shall," replied the other; "it is a good trade. What do you intend to be, Benjamin?"—"A painter." "A painter! what sort of trade is a painter? I never heard of it before."—"A painter," said this humble son of a Philadelphia Quaker, "is the companion of kings and emperors." "You are surely mad," said the embryo tailor; "there are neither kings nor emperors in America."—"Aye, but there are plenty in other parts of the world." "And do you really intend to be a tailor?"—"Indeed I do; there is nothing surer." "Then you may ride alone," said the future companion of kings and emperors, leaping down, "I will not

ride with one willing to be a tailor." This incident, it is said, together with his skill in drawing, which now began to be talked of, drove the schoolboys of Springfield to walls and boards, with chalk and ochre. This was only a temporary enthusiasm, and soon subsided; yet many of their drawings, West afterwards said, were worthy of the students of a regular academy. Their proficiency, then, had surpassed his own; for even when at Rome he was unwilling to show his drawings, considering them as imperfect and incorrect.

He was often at a loss for the proper materials of his art; pencils, and colours, and panels were not then included in the articles of daily demand in Pennsylvania. A carpenter, whose name is forgotten, gave him three broad and beautiful poplar boards, and planed them smoothly; these, when covered with groupes in ink, chalk, and charcoal, were purchased for a dollar each by a neighbour of the name of Wayne; and Dr. Morris at the same time gave him money to buy panels and pencils for future compositions. "These were the first public patrons of the artist," says Galt, "and it is at his own request that their names are thus particularly inserted."

That a boy who had some skill in painting lived at Springfield began to be spoken of; and Mr. Flower, a justice of Chester, looked at his works, and obtained leave from his parents to take him for a few weeks to his house. A young English lady was governess to his daughters; she was well acquainted with art, and was also intimate with the Greek and Latin poets, and loved to point out to the young artist the most picturesque passages.

He had never before heard of Greece or of Rome, or of the heroes, philosophers, poets, painters, and historians, whom they had produced, and he listened, while the lady spoke of them, with an enthusiasm which, after an experience of near seventy years in the world, he loved to live over again. His residence here introduced him to Ross, a lawyer of some note, who lived in the neighbouring town of Lancaster ; and Mrs. Ross, who was eminently beautiful, desired to sit to West for her portrait. The people of Lancaster had taste and intelligence ; they saw him perform his task with much ability, and came in such crowds to sit to the boy, that he had some trouble in meeting their demands. Those citizens were kindly persons, and easily pleased. A gunsmith of Lancaster, who had a classical turn, proposed a painting of the death of Socrates. West had heard of Socrates, and forthwith made a sketch which his employer called clever : but he had now begun to feel his deficiencies and see his difficulties. “ I have hitherto painted faces,” said West, “ and people clothed ; what am I to do with the slave who presents the poison—he ought, I think, to be naked.” Henry, the gunsmith, went to his shop, and returned with one of his workmen, a handsome man, and half-naked, saying, “ There is your model.” He introduced him accordingly into the picture—which excited some attention.

West was now fifteen years old ; and though the school has been more than once spoken of, his education up to this period had been sadly neglected : indeed, at no period of his life had he any claim to be called an educated man. He was

the first and last President of our Academy who found spelling a difficulty.

Dr. Smith, a gentleman of considerable classical attainments, perceived his deficiency, and generously undertook the part of instructor; but the Cherokee Indians seem to have been the only preceptors who went wisely to work with him. This new master pursued a strange enough method. "He regarded him," says Galt, "as destined to be a painter, and on this account did not impose upon him those grammatical exercises of language which are usually required from the young student of the classics, but directed his attention to those incidents which were likely to interest his fancy, and furnish him, at some future period, with subjects for the easel." This might have done well with a fairer scholar—with West, if it was desired that his imagination should catch the life and spirit of antiquity, he ought to have begun nearer the beginning. It is needless to expect a strong crop, when we have only scratched the surface of the soil.

Whilst picking up those classical crumbs, the youth was attacked by a fever. Every fresh aspect of his early life had something in it remarkable and romantic. When good medicine and good nursing began to remove his complaint, another adversary invaded his repose. This was a shadowy illusion, which, like an image in a dream, was ever unstable, and changing shape as well as hue. It became first visible in the form of a white cow, which, entering at one side of the house, walked over his bed, and vanished. A sow and a litter of pigs succeeded. His sister thought him delirious, and

sent for a physician : but his pulse had a recovering beat in it ; his skin was moist and cool ; his thirst was gone, and every thing betokened convalescence. While the doctor stood puzzled about a disease which had such healthy symptoms, he was alarmed by West assuring him that he saw the figures of several friends passing at that moment across the roof. Conceiving these to be the professional visions of a raving artist, he prescribed a draught which would have brought sleep to all the eyes of Argus, and departed. As he went, up rose West, and discovered that all those visitations came through a knot hole in the shutters, which threw into the darkened room whatever forms were passing along the street at the time. He called in his sister, showed her the apparitions, gliding along the ceiling, then laid his hand on the aperture, and all vanished. On recovering he made various experiments, which he communicated to Williams ; who found it to be what Butler calls "a new-found old invention." He produced a London *camera obscura* ; and West contented himself with the praise due to collateral ingenuity.

On returning to Springfield, his future career became the subject of anxious deliberation. Some of his best friends were in favour of his making art his profession ; his mother was desirous of distinction for her youngest child, and the father, influenced by the prophecy of Peckover, at length resolved on submitting the matter to the wisdom of the Society to which he belonged.

The Friends met—and the spirit of speech first descended on one John Williamson. "To John West and Sarah Pearson," said this Western lumi-

nary, “a man-child hath been born, on whom God hath conferred some remarkable gifts of mind; and you have all heard that, by something amounting to inspiration, the youth has been induced to study the art of painting. It is true that our tenets refuse to own the utility of that art to mankind, but it seemeth to me that we have considered the matter too nicely. God has bestowed on this youth a genius for art,—shall we question his wisdom? Can we believe that he gives such rare gifts but for a wise and a good purpose? I see the Divine hand in this; we shall do well to sanction the art and encourage this youth.” The Quakers, persuaded by this sagacious enthusiast, or moved by the belief that the worldly fame which accompanies genius would shed a new halo on their sect, acknowledged the boy’s powers upon the principle of implicit faith—gave their unanimous consent, like the “Brethren” in the Alchymist, to have their lead turned into gold, and forthwith summoned the youth, in whom so many hopes centered, before them.

He came and took his station in the middle of the room—his father on his right hand, his mother on his left, while around him flocked the whole Quaker community. It was one of the women that spake first; but the words of Williamson are alone remembered. “Painting,” said he, “has been hitherto employed to embellish life, to preserve voluptuous images, and add to the sensual gratifications of man. For this we classed it among vain and merely ornamental things, and excluded it from amongst us. But this is not the principle, but the mis-employment of painting. In wise and in pure hands it rises in the scale of moral excellence, and

displays a loftiness of sentiment and a devout dignity worthy of the contemplation of Christians. I think genius is given by God for some high purpose. What the purpose is let us not inquire—it will be manifest in his own good time and way. He hath in this remote wilderness endowed with the rich gifts of a superior spirit this youth who has now our consent to cultivate his talents for art—may it be demonstrated in his life and works that the gifts of God have not been bestowed in vain, nor the motives of the beneficent inspiration, which induces us to suspend the strict operation of our tenets, prove barren of religious or moral effect!" "At the conclusion of this address," says Galt, "the women rose and kissed the young artist, and the men one by one laid their hands on his head."

That this scene made a strong impression on the mind of West, we have his own assurance; he looked upon himself as expressly dedicated to art—and considered this release from the strict tenets of his religious community as implying a covenant on his part to employ his powers on subjects holy and pure. The grave simplicity of the Quaker continued to the last in the looks and manners of the artist, and the moral rectitude and internal purity of the man were diffused through all his productions.

Being now left more to the freedom of his own will, West deviated into a course not at all professional, but for which the accommodating eloquence of a John Williamson might have conceived a ready apology. He became a soldier. The Friends had not included this among those pure and pious pur-

suits, which they ascribed to the future painter of history; they expressed, however, neither surprize nor sorrow for this backsliding in Benjamin, nor did they either admonish or remonstrate. He took up a musket—inspired with his enthusiasm, young Wayne, afterwards a distinguished officer—and joining the troops of General Forbes, proceeded in search of the relics of that gallant army lost in the desert by the unfortunate General Braddock.

To West and his companions were added a select body of Indians; these again were accompanied by several officers of the Old Highland Watch—the well-known forty-second, commanded by the most anxious person of the whole detachment, Major Sir Peter Halket, who had lost his father and brother in that unhappy expedition. Though many months had elapsed since the battle, and though time, the fowls of the air, the beasts of the field, and wild men more savage than they, had done their worst, Halket was not without hopes of finding the remains of his father and his brother, as an Indian warrior assured him that he had seen an elderly officer drop dead beneath a large and remarkable tree, and a young subaltern, who hastened to his aid, fall mortally wounded across the body. After a long march through the woods, they approached the fatal valley. They were affected at seeing the bones of men, who, escaping wounded from invisible enemies, had sunk down and expired as they leaned against the trees, and they were shocked to see in other places the reliques of their countrymen mingled with the ashes of savage bivouacks.

When they reached the principal scene of destruction, the Indian guide looked anxiously round, darted into the wood, and in a few seconds raised a shrill cry. Halket and West hastened to the place—the Indian pointed out the tree—a circle of soldiers was drawn round it, whilst others removed the leaves of the forest which had fallen since the fight. They found two skeletons—one lying across the other—Halket looked at the skulls—said faintly “It is my father!” and dropt senseless in the arms of his companions. On recovering, he said “I know who it is by that artificial tooth.” They dug a grave in the desert, covered the bones with a Highland plaid, and interred them reverently. This scene, at once picturesque and pious, made a lasting impression on the artist’s mind. After he had painted the Death of Wolfe, he proposed the finding of the bones of the Halkets, as an historical subject; and, describing to Lord Grosvenor the gloomy wood, the wild Indians, the passionate grief of the son, and the sympathy of his companions, said he conceived it would form a picture full of dignity and sentiment. His lordship thought otherwise. The subject which genius chooses for itself, is, however, in most cases, the best. The sober imagination of West had here a twofold excitement—he had witnessed the scene, and it was American—and, had Lord Grosvenor encouraged him to embody his conception, the result would, I doubt not, have been a worthy companion to the Death of Wolfe.

West was called from the first and last of his fields by a messenger announcing the dangerous illness of his mother. He hastened home and

arrived only in time to receive the welcome of her eyes and her mute blessing. He loved and honoured her much—and when he was old and gray, recalled her looks, and dwelt on her expressions of fondness and of hope, with a sadness which he wished neither to subdue nor conceal. With the spirit of his mother, the charm seemed to have departed from his father's house ; he seldom spoke of it afterwards, and soon forsook it for Philadelphia, where he established himself as a portrait painter in the eighteenth year of his age.

His extreme youth, the peculiar circumstances of his history, and his undoubted merit, brought many sitters. His prices were very low—two guineas and a half for a head, and five guineas for a half length ;—and the money thus laboriously earned was treasured prudently—to secure, at some future day, the means of travel and study. Young as he was, he had the sagacity to see that travel influenced the public opinion, and that study, and long study, was necessary for him if he really wished to excel. He knew that the master-works of art were in other lands, and on Rome especially he had already set his heart. So little, indeed, of the genius of the Old World had found its way to the New, that when the accidental capture of a Spanish vessel had placed a St. Ignatius of the Murillo school in the gallery of Governor Hamilton, West copied it without being either aware of its excellence, or even to what style of art it pertained. Dr. Smith admired so much the posture and sentiment of the saint, that he persuaded the young artist to paint his portrait in the same position ;—a kind of appropriation which saves time

and invention, and can give little fame. With better taste he painted the Trial of Susanna, a work which he loved long after to talk of and describe.

From Philadelphia, after painting the heads of all who desired it, he went to New York ; with which place he was not at first much delighted. Eager traffickers from all quarters thronged her streets and quays, and the young painter was elbowed into the shade by those

“ Who darkly grub this earthly hole  
in low pursuit.”

Now and then, however, a merchant, after a successful bargain, sat down in the joy of the moment for his portrait ; and the wandering mariner, who found markets on the rise, and gains on the increase, hung up his likeness also in the Temple of Fortune. Though art was not in high honour, West, nevertheless, found its pursuit profitable ; he raised his price of a half length to ten guineas ; and the spirit of amassing money seemed in a fair way of making him its own, when a letter from Smith recalled his thoughts to Italy.

The Italian harvest having failed, a consignment of wheat and flour was sent from the New World to the Old, and put under the charge of one of the Allens of Philadelphia, who offered West a passage to Leghorn. It happened that a New York merchant, of the name of Kelly, was at that time sitting to West for his portrait, and to this gentleman the artist spoke of his intended journey, and represented how much he expected a year or two of study in Rome would improve his skill and taste. Kelly paid him for his portrait — gave him a letter

to his agents in Philadelphia, shook him by the hand, and wished him a good voyage. Ere he reached his native place, after an absence of eleven months, all the arrangements for his departure had been completed by Smith ; and when he presented the letter of Kelly, he found that it contained an order from that generous merchant to his agent to pay him fifty guineas—"a present to aid in his equipment for Italy." The plodding citizens of New York rose in the painter's estimation at least fifty per cent. Two merchants in Leghorn, Messrs. Jackson and Rutherford, received him kindly, and, with introductory letters to some leading men in his pocket, he departed for Rome.

West, like most men of any imagination who visit Rome, was always fond of describing his first impressions. He had walked on whilst his travelling companion was baiting the horses, and had reached a rising ground which offered him a view far and wide. The sun was newly risen, all was calm and clear, and he saw before him a spacious champaign bounded by green hills, and in the midst a wilderness of noble ruins, over which towered the nobler dome of Saint Peter's. A broken column at his feet, which served as a milestone, informed him that he was within eight thousand paces of the ancient Mistress of the World, and a sluggish boor, clad in rough goat skins, driving his flocks to pasture amidst the ruins of a temple, told him how far she had fallen. In the midst of a reverie, in which he was comparing the treacherous peasants of the Campagna with the painted barbarians of North America, he en-

tered Rome. This was on the 10th of July, 1760, and in the twenty-second year of his age.

When it was known that a young American had come to study Raphael and Michael Angelo, some curiosity was excited among the Roman virtuosi. The first fortunate exhibiter of this Lion from the Western wilderness was Lord Grantham ; he invited West to dinner, and afterwards carried him to an evening party, where he found almost all those persons to whom he had brought letters of introduction. Amongst the rest was Cardinal Albani, who, though old and blind, had such delicacy of touch that he was considered supreme in all matters of judgment regarding medals and intaglios. "I have the honour," said Lord Grantham, "to present a young American, who has a letter for your Eminence, and who has come to Italy for the purpose of studying the Fine Arts." The Cardinal knew so little of the New World, that he conceived an American must needs be a savage. "Is he black or white?" said the aged virtuoso, holding out both hands, that he might have the satisfaction of touching at least this new wonder. Lord Grantham smiled, and said "he is fair—very fair." "What! as fair as I am?" exclaimed the prelate. Now the complexion of this churchman was a deep olive—that of West more than commonly fair—and as they stood together the company smiled. "As fair as the Cardinal," became for a while proverbial.

Others, who had the use of their eyes, seemed to consider the young American as at most a better kind of savage ; and, accordingly, were curious to

watch him. They wished to try what effect the Apollo, the Venus, and the works of Raphael would have upon him, and "thirty of the most magnificent equipages in the capital of Christendom, and filled with some of the most erudite characters in Europe," says Galt," conducted the young Quaker to view the master-pieces of art. It was agreed that the Apollo should be first submitted to his view: the statue was enclosed in a case, and when the keeper threw open the doors, West unconsciously exclaimed "My God—a young Mohawk warrior!" The Italians were surprized and mortified with the comparison of their noblest statue to a wild savage; and West, perceiving the unfavourable impression, proceeded to remove it. He described the Mohawks—the natural elegance and admirable symmetry of their persons—the elasticity of their limbs, and their motions free and unconstrained. "I have seen them often," he continued, "standing in the very attitude of this Apollo, and pursuing with an intense eye the arrow which they had just discharged from the bow." The Italians cleared their moody brows, and allowed that a better criticism had rarely been pronounced. West was no longer a barbarian.

Of his claim to mix with men of genius, however, he had as yet submitted no proof: he had indeed shown his drawings to Mengs and to Hamilton, but they were, as he confessed, destitute of original merit—nor, indeed, could they be commended for either neatness or accuracy. He waited on Lord Grantham—"I cannot," said he, "produce a finished sketch, like the other students, because I have never been instructed in drawing; but I can paint

a little, and if you will do me the honour to sit for your portrait that I may show it to Mengs, you will do me a great kindness." His Lordship consented, the portrait was painted—and, the name of the artist being kept secret, the picture was placed in the gallery of Crespigni, where amateurs and artists were invited to see it. It was known that Lord Grantham was sitting to Mengs, and to him some ascribed the portrait, though they thought the colouring surpassed his other compositions. Dance, an Englishman of sense and acuteness, looked at it closely : " the colouring surpasses that of Mengs," he observed, " but the drawing is neither so fine nor so good." The company engaged eagerly in the discussion—Crespigni seized the proper moment, and said " It is not painted by Mengs." " By whom then?" they exclaimed, " for there is no other painter in Rome capable of doing any thing so good." " By that young gentleman," said the other,—turning to West, who sat uneasy and agitated. The English held out their hands—the Italians ran and embraced him.

Mengs himself soon arrived—he looked at the picture, and spoke with great kindness. " Young man, you have no occasion to come to Rome to learn to paint. What I therefore recommend to you is this:—Examine every thing here worthy of attention—making drawings of some half-dozen of the best statues. Go to Florence and study in the galleries—go to Bologna and study the works of the Carracci, and then proceed to Venice and view the productions of Tintoretti, Titian, and Paul Veronese. When all this is accomplished, return to Rome, paint a historical picture, exhibit it pub-

licly, and then the opinion which will be expressed of your talents will determine the line of art which you ought to follow." A dangerous illness interposed, and for a time prevented West from following this common but sensible counsel. The change of scene, the presence of works of first-rate excellence, and the anxiety to distinguish himself, preyed upon him—sleep deserted his pillow, a fever followed, and by the advice of his physicians he returned to Leghorn, where, after a lingering sickness of eleven months, he was completely cured.

Those who befriend genius when it is struggling for distinction, befriend the world ; and their names should be held in remembrance. There is good sense and right feeling in the reply of Mahomet to the insinuation of the fair Ayesha, that his first wife Cadijah was old and unlovely, and that he had now a better in her place. "No, by Alla!—there never was a better—she *believed* in me when men despised me; she relieved my wants when I was poor and persecuted by the world." The names of Smith, Hamilton, Kelly, Allen, Jackson, Rutherford, and Lord Grantham must be dear to all the admirers of West—they aided him in the infancy of his fame and fortune—they cheered him when he was drooping or desponding, and watched over his person and his purse with the vigilence of true friendship. The story of his success with the portrait of Lord Grantham found its way to Allen at Philadelphia, when he was at dinner with Governor Hamilton. "I regard this young man," said the worthy merchant, "as an honour to his country; and as he is the first that America has sent out to cultivate the Fine Arts, he

shall not be frustrated in his studies, for I shall send him whatever money he may require." "I think with you, sir," said Hamilton—"but you must not have all the honour to yourself—allow me to unite with you in the responsibility of the credit." Sometime afterwards, when West went to take up ten pounds from his agents, the last of the sum with which he had commenced his studies, one of the partners opened a letter, and said "I am instructed to give you unlimited credit—you will have the goodness to ask for what sum you please." It is not without cause that Mr. Galt says, "the munificence of the Medici was equalled by these American magistrates."

West, with recovered health and a heavier purse, was now able to follow the counsel of Mengs;—he visited Florence, Bologna and Venice. The colouring of Titian was a secret into which he strove in vain to penetrate, nor did the examination and dissection of what Italians call the "internal light" of his productions solve the mystery. Reynolds acquired the profitable secret and kept it to himself, and many years afterwards West imagined that he had obtained it too. It is doubted by some whether either ever mastered it completely. It is certain that they did not succeed in using it with the good fortune of Titian, whose colouring extinguishes all modern works as sunshine overwhelms candlelight. The pure primary colours which West afterwards harmonized with the semi-tints fall far short of the lucid splendour of Titian—they lost by time, from which the colours of the Italian appear to gain an increase of lustre.

Having seen all that was worth seeing, West now

returned to Rome. Romance and prophecy seemed to have marked the calm and serious Quaker for their own—a fresh adventure was ready for him at Rome. He was conversing in the British Coffee-house with Gavin Hamilton, when an old man, with a guitar suspended from his shoulder, offered his services as an Improvisator bard. "Here is an American," said the wily Scot, "come to study the Fine Arts in Rome—take him for your theme—and it is a magnificent one." West, who never in his life conceived what a joke meant, sat grave and steady like one of his own sitters, while the minstrel unslung his guitar, and, with a glance that told Hamilton he knew what to do, burst into song. At first he was something mystical, till he saw that his subject had a reasonable gift of credulity, and then he tried plainer words. "I behold," he sung, "in this youth an instrument chosen by heaven to create in his native country a taste for those arts which have elevated the nature of man—an assurance that his land will be the refuge of science and knowledge, when in the old age of Europe they shall have forsaken her shores. All things of heavenly origin move westward, and Truth and Art have their periods of light and darkness. Rejoice, O Rome, for thy spirit immortal and undecayed now spreads towards a new world, where, like the soul of man in Paradise, it will be perfected more and more." On the raving of this wily mendicant, West bestowed both money and tears; and even in riper years he was willing to consider this as another prophecy.

He accompanied the Abbâtè Grant to see high

mass performed in Saint Peter's. At the elevation of the Host, when all were silent and kneeling, a voice exclaimed in the accent of Scotland, "O Lord, cast not the kirk down on them for this abomination!" This burst of enthusiasm, in a strange tongue, was received by all, save the Scottish priest, as a lively manifestation of Catholic zeal—Grant was alarmed for his countryman, and advised him to be quiet during the rest of the ceremony, unless he desired to be torn to pieces by the religious mob. This man had travelled to Rome, with a fixed resolution either to convert the Pope to Calvinism or become a martyr. He yielded for the moment to Grant's entreaties : but next day re-appeared in the same place, demanded the conversion of his Holiness and the downfall of Popery, and to his exceeding great joy was seized by the Inquisition, and consigned to a dungeon. The last of the princes of that unfortunate race who sat so long, and often so worthily, on the thrones of Scotland and England, interposed, and sent the resolute presbyterian home in safety.

West was not so far dazzled by those romantic occurrences as to forget his studies. He painted a picture of Cimon and Iphigenia, and another of Angelica and Medora ; which confirmed the favourable opinions expressed by his friends, and opened the way to those marks of academic approbation usually bestowed on fortunate artists. Having studied the great Italian masters, and acquired much useful knowledge in the trick of colour and composition, he had no wish to remain in Rome—his heart was with his native land. He, however, resolved to visit the Island of his fathers, and pre-

pared for his journey. Of Rome he has left us this brief and pithy memorandum : “ Michael Angelo has not succeeded in giving a probable character to any of his works, the Moses perhaps excepted. The works of Raphael grow daily more interesting, natural, and noble.”

At Parma he was elected a member of the Academy—an honour which Florence and Bologna had conferred before—and presented them with a copy of the St. Jerome of Correggio, of such excellence that the reigning Prince desired to see the artist. He went to court, and, to the utter confusion of the attendants, appeared with his hat on. The prince was no stranger to the character of the Quakers, nor to the condescension of the British law in their favour. He was, moreover, a lover of William Penn. He received the young artist with complacency, and dismissed him with many expressions of regard. On reaching one of the French frontier towns he was insulted by the populace, who considered their manufactures as ruined by the English. Again something like prophecy mingles with the explanation of the magistrate who protected him. “ The ignorant people (said he) blame England, when they should blame our own government. But the court of France is become a band of profligates—the truly great and good are banished from the palace ; this cannot last long. Frenchmen will one day take a terrible revenge for the insults which they are doomed to suffer from those who pander to the prodigality of the court.” These words were uttered twenty-four years before the Revolution. West cannot be born, nor choose his profession,

nor enjoy himself in a coffee-house, nor travel through France, without the influence or the accompaniment of prediction. Of French art he conceived a mean opinion. It was, said he, deficient in simplicity; an air of studied affectation was breathed over it; and the absence of the nobler spirit of painting was sought to be concealed by the petty graces and brilliancy of fine finishing.

On the 20th of June, 1763, West arrived in London: Allen, Hamilton, and Smith, his early and stedfast friends, happened to be there; they welcomed him with open arms, and introduced him to many officers of note who had heard of him in Pennsylvania. At this time he had no intention of remaining in England, nor of practising his profession for the time that he stayed. He visited the collections of Hampton Court, Windsor, and Blenheim; resided some time at Reading with Thomas West, the half-brother of his father, and looked at the vanities of Bath in the middle of its season. By degrees he began to love the land and the people. He was introduced to Reynolds; and a letter from Mengs made him acquainted with Wilson. Intercourse with artists, and an examination of their works, awakened his ambition: he consulted no one, but took chambers in Bedford-street, Covent Garden, and set up his easel. When his determination was known, his brethren in art came round him in a body, welcomed him with much cordiality, and encouraged him to continue his career as an historical painter. Reynolds was devoted to portraits; Hogarth on the brink of the grave; Barry engaged in controversies in Rome; Wilson neglected; Gainsborough's excellence lay

in landscape ; and the prudent American saw that he had a fair field and no opponents.

As soon, therefore, as he had finished his *Angelica* and *Medora*, he sent it, by the advice of Reynolds, to the exhibition, together with the *Cimon* and *Iphigenia*, and a portrait of General Monckton, second in command to Wolfe in the battle of Quebec. While he was employed in finishing those works, he had the good fortune to be introduced to Dr. Johnson and Mr. Burke. Johnson he admired much, and found civil and even kind. Burke also was indulgent ; but our artist conceived there was an air of mystery about his demeanour. West at once recognised him as the brother of the chief of the Benedictine Monks at Parma.

The works which West exhibited were well received ; the conception was good, and the colouring clear ; and his love of serious and solemn subjects attracted the special notice of some of the dignitaries of the church. He painted, for Dr. Newton, the parting of Hector and Andromache, —and, for the Bishop of Worcester, the Return of the Prodigal Son. His reputation rose so much with these productions, that Lord Rockingham tempted him with the offer of a permanent engagement, and a salary of seven hundred pounds a year, to embellish with historical paintings his mansion in Yorkshire. West consulted his friends concerning this alluring offer—they were sensible men—they advised him to confide in the *public* : and he followed, for a time, their salutary counsel.

This successful beginning, and the promise of full employment, induced him to resolve on remain-

ing in the Old Country. But he was attached to Elizabeth Shewell, a young lady of his native land—absence had augmented his regard, and he wished to return to Philadelphia, marry her, and bring her to England. He disclosed the state of his affections to his friends, Smith and Allen; those gentlemen took a less romantic view of the matter, advised the artist to stick to his easel, and arranged the whole so prudently, that the lady came to London accompanied by a relation, whose time was not so valuable as West's—and they were married on the 2d of September, 1765, in the church of St. Martin's in the Fields. As he was a man without violent passions and something cold and considerate, he made perhaps but an indifferent figure as a lover; his wife, however, was kind and obedient, and their fireside had repose and peace.

Dr. Drummond, the Archbishop of York, a dignified and liberal prelate, and an admirer of painting, invited West to his table, conversed with him on the influence of art, and on the honour which the patronage of genius reflected on the rich, and opening Tacitus, pointed out that fine passage where Agrippina lands with the ashes of Germanicus. He caused his son to read it again and again, commented upon it with taste and feeling, and requested West to make him a painting of that subject. The artist went home; it was then late, but before closing his eyes he formed a sketch, and carried it early next morning to his patron, who, glad to see that his own notions were likely to be embodied in lasting colours, requested that the full size work might be proceeded with. Nor was this all—that munificent prelate proposed to

raise three thousand pounds by subscription, to enable West to relinquish likenesses and give his whole time and talent to historical painting. Fifteen hundred pounds were accordingly subscribed by himself and his friends ; but the public refused to co-operate, and the scheme was abandoned.

The Archbishop regarded the failure of this plan as a stigma on the country; his self-love too was offended. He disregarded alike the coldness of the Duke of Portland and the evasions of Lord Rockingham, to whom he communicated his scheme—sought and obtained an audience of his Majesty, then young and unacquainted with cares—informed him that a devout American and Quaker had painted, at his request, such a noble picture that he was desirous to secure his talents for the throne and the country. The King was much interested with the story, and said, “Let me see this young painter of your's with his Agrippina as soon as you please.” The prelate retired to communicate his success to West.

Now all this happened to be overheard by one of those officious ladies who love to untie the knots of mysteries, and anticipate the natural disclosure of all secrets. Away flew her ladyship to the house of the artist—refused to disclose either her name or condition, acquainted him with the application of Drummond and the kindness of the King, and retired. She was not well away till a gentleman came from the palace to request West's attendance with the picture of Agrippina. “His Majesty,” said the messenger, “is a young man of great simplicity and candour ; sedate in his affections, scrupulous in forming private friendships, good from

principle, and pure from a sense of the beauty of virtue." Forty years intercourse, we might almost say friendship, confirmed to the painter the accuracy of these words.

The King received West with easy frankness, assisted him to place the Agrippina in a favourable light, removed the attendants, and brought in the Queen, to whom he presented our Quaker. He related to her Majesty the history of the picture, and bade her notice the simplicity of the design and the beauty of the colouring. "There is another noble Roman subject," observed his Majesty, "the departure of Regulus from Rome—would it not make a fine picture?" "It is a magnificent subject," said the painter. "Then," said the King, "you shall paint it for me." He turned with a smile to the Queen, and said, "The Archbishop made one of his sons read Tacitus to Mr. West, and I would have read Livy to him myself—but that part of the history which describes the departure of Regulus is unfortunately lost." He then repeated his command that the picture should be painted.

West was too prudent not to wish to retain the Sovereign's good opinion—and his modesty and his merit deserved it. The palace doors now seemed to open of their own accord, and the domestics attended with an obedient start to the wishes of him whom the King delighted to honour. There are minor matters which sometimes help a man on to fame; and in these too he had his share; West was a skilful skater, and in America had formed an acquaintance on the ice with Colonel—afterwards too well known in the colonial war as General

Howe: this friendship had dissolved with the thaw, and was forgotten till one day the painter having tied on his skates at the Serpentine, was astonishing the timid practitioners of London by the rapidity of his motions and the graceful figure which he cut. Some one cried "West! West!" it was Colonel Howe. "I am glad to see you," said he, "and not the less so that you come in good time to vindicate my praises of American skating." He called to him Lord Spencer Hamilton and some of the Cavendishes, to whom he introduced West as one of the Philadelphia prodigies, and requested him to show them what was called "The Salute." He performed this feat so much to their satisfaction, that they went away spreading the praises of the American skater over London. Nor was the considerate Quaker insensible to the value of such commendations; he continued to frequent the Serpentine and to gratify large crowds by cutting the Philadelphia Salute. Many to the praise of his skating added panegyrics on his professional skill, and not a few, to vindicate their applause, followed him to his easel, and sat for their portraits.

While West was painting the Departure of Regulus, the present Royal Academy was planned. The Society of Incorporated Artists, of which he was a member, had grown rich by yearly exhibitions, and how to lay out this money became the subject of vehement debate. The Architects were for a house, the Sculptors for statues, and the Painters proposed a large gallery for historical works, while a mean and sordid member or two voted to let it lie and grow more, for it was pleasant to see riches accumulate. West, who happened to be a

director, approved of none of these notions, and with Reynolds withdrew from the association. The newspapers of the day noticed these indecent bickerings, and the King, learning the cause from the lips of West, declared that he was ready to patronize any association formed on principles calculated to advance the interests of art. A plan was proposed by some of the dissenters, and submitted to his Majesty, who corrected it, and drew up some additional articles, with his own hand.

Meanwhile the Incorporated Artists continued their debates, in total ignorance that their dissenting brethren were laying the foundation of a surer structure than their own. Kirby, teacher of perspective to the King, had been chosen president: but so secretly was all managed, that he had never heard a whisper in the palace concerning the new academy, and in his inaugural address from the chair, he assured his companions that his Majesty would not countenance the Schismatics. While West was one day busy with his *Regulus*, the King and Queen looking on, Kirby was announced, and his Majesty having consulted his consort in German, admitted him, and introduced him to West, to whose person he was a stranger. He looked at the picture, praised it warmly, and congratulated the artist; then, turning to the King, said, "Your Majesty never mentioned anything of this work to me—who made the frame?—it is not made by one of your Majesty's workman—it ought to have been made by the royal carver and gilder." To this impertinence the King answered with great calmness, "Kirby, whenever you are able to paint me such a picture as this, your friend shall make the

frame." "I hope Mr. West," said Kirby, "that you intend to exhibit this picture?" "It is painted for the palace," said West, "and its exhibition must depend upon his Majesty's pleasure." "Assuredly," said the King, "I shall be very happy to let the work be shown to the public." "Then, Mr. West," said Kirby, "you will send it to my exhibition." "No!" interrupted his Majesty; "it must go to *my* exhibition—to that of the Royal Academy." The President of the Associated Artists bowed with much humility and retired. He did not long survive this mortification, and his death was imputed, by the founders of the new Academy, to jealousy of their rising establishment, but by those who knew him well to a more ordinary cause, the decay of nature. The Royal Academy was founded, and in its first exhibition appeared the *Regulus*.

A change was now to be effected in the character of British art; hitherto historical painting had appeared in a masquing habit: the actions of Englishmen seemed all to have been performed, if costume were to be believed, by Greeks or by Romans. West dismissed at once this pedantry, and restored nature and propriety in his noble work of "The Death of Wolfe." The multitude acknowledged its excellence at once. The lovers of old art, the manufacturers of compositions called by courtesy classical, complained of the barbarism of boots, and buttons, and blunderbusses, and cried out for naked warriors with bows, bucklers, and battering rams. Lord Grosvenor, disregarding the frowns of the amateurs, and the cold approbation of the Academy, purchased this work, which, in

s spite of laced coats and cocked hats, is one of the best of our historical pictures. The Indian warrior, watching the dying hero to see if he equalled in fortitude the children of the deserts, is a fine stroke of nature and poetry.

The King questioned West concerning the picture, and put him on his defence of this new heresy in art. To the curiosity of Galt we owe the sensible answer of West. "When it was understood," said the artist, "that I intended to paint the characters as they had actually appeared on the scene, the Archbishop of York called on Reynolds, and asked his opinion; they both came to my house to dissuade me from running so great a risk. Reynolds began a very ingenious and elegant dissertation on the state of the public taste in this country, and the danger which every innovation incurred of contempt and ridicule, and concluded by urging me earnestly to adopt the costume of antiquity, as more becoming the greatness of my subject than the modern garb of European warriors. I answered that the event to be commemorated happened in the year 1758, in a region of the world unknown to the Greeks and Romans, and at a period of time when no warriors who wore such costume existed. The subject I have to represent is a great battle fought and won, and the same truth which gives law to the historian should rule the painter. If instead of the facts of the action I introduce fictions, how shall I be understood by posterity? The classic dress is certainly picturesque, but by using it I shall lose in sentiment what I gain in external grace. I want to mark the place, the time and the people, and to do this

I must abide by truth. They went away then, and returned again when I had the painting finished. Reynolds seated himself before the picture, examined it with deep and minute attention for half an hour ; then rising, said to Drummond, West has conquered—he has treated his subject as it ought to be treated—I retract my objections. I foresee that this picture will not only become one of the most popular, but will occasion a revolution in art.” “I wish,” said the King, “that I had known all this before, for the objection has been the means of Lord Grosvenor’s getting the picture, but you shall make a copy for me.”

West had now obtained the personal confidence of the King and the favour of the public—his commissions were numerous, but of course the works for the palace had precedence. His Majesty employed him to paint the death of Epaminondas, as a companion to that of Wolfe—the death of the Chevalier Bayard—Cyrus liberating the family of the King of Armenia—and Segestus and his daughter brought before Germanicus. The air of the palace had some influence on the mind of the prudent Quaker. The great Leibnitz had pointed out the descendants of Segestus in our own royal line, and West communicated a little of the lineaments of the living to the images of the dead. The good King was much pleased with the work.

It is said, that Sir Joshua Reynolds now began to observe West’s favour somewhat resentfully—thinking that a ray or two of the royal sunshine might in fairness have fallen upon himself. The President was not fool enough to complain—but his friends did so for him ; while West, too pru-

dent to carry himself loftily because of his good fortune, enjoyed his success in secret, and continued in the outward man submissive and thankful. To Reynolds had fallen the whole portrait department of church and state, which lay without the gates of the palace ; while within, West reigned triumphant. Thus they divided the British world of art between them, while Barry and Wilson, by toiling without distinction, were earning precarious bread.

West was not a man to remain insensible to the advantage of having a young, amiable, and patriotic sovereign for his patron. The painter expressed his regret that the Italians had dipped their pencils in the monkish miracles and incredible legends of the church, to the almost total neglect of their national history : the King instantly bethought him of the victorious reign of our third Edward, and of St. George's Hall in Windsor Castle. West had a ready hand—he sketched out the following subjects, seven of which are from real, and one from fabulous history :

1. Edward the Third embracing the Black Prince, after the Battle of Cressy. 2. The Installation of the Order of the Garter. 3. The Black Prince receiving the King of France and his son prisoners, at Poictiers. 4. St. George vanquishing the Dragon. 5. Queen Phillipa defeating David of Scotland, in the Battle of Neville's Cross. 6. Queen Phillipa interceding with Edward for the Burgessess of Calais. 7. King Edward forcing the passage of the Somme. 8. King Edward crowning Sir Eustace de Ribaumont at Calais. These works are very large. They were the fruit of long

study and much labour, and with the exception of the Death of Wolfe and the Battle of La Hogue, they are the best of all the numerous works of this artist. Their lustre is fresh and unfaded—their colouring natural and harmonious: they present a lively image of the times and the people; but they are deficient in strength and variety of character—they seize attention, but are unable to detain it.

West, however, had the good fortune to maintain his influence at Windsor. When the King grew weary of courts and camps and battles, the observing artist took new ground, and appealed to the religious feelings of his royal patron. He suggested to the King a series of pictures on the progress of revealed religion: a splendid Oratory was projected for their reception; and half a dozen dignitaries of the church were summoned to consider the propriety of introducing paintings into a place of worship. “When I reflect,” said the King, “that the Reformation condemned religious paintings in churches, and that the Parliament in the unhappy days of Charles the First did the same, I am fearful of introducing anything which my people might think popish. Will you give me your opinions on the subject?” After some deliberation Bishop Hurd delivered, in the name of his brethren and himself, their unanimous opinion, that the introduction of religious paintings into *his Majesty's Chapel* would in no respect whatever violate the laws or the usages of the Church of England. “We have examined too,” continued Hurd, “thirty-five subjects which the painter proposed for our choice, and we feel that there is not

one of them but may be treated in a way, that even a Quaker might contemplate with edification." The King conceived this to be an ironical allusion to West, and was a little nettled. "The Quakers," he replied, "are a body of Christians for whom I have a high respect. I love their peaceful tenets and their benevolence to one another, and, but for the obligations of birth, I would be a Quaker." The Bishop bowed submissively and retired.

No subtle divine ever laboured more diligently on controversial texts, than did our painter in evolving his pictures out of the grand and awful subject of revealed religion. He divided it into Four Dispensations—the Antediluvian, the Patriarchal, the Mosaical, and the Prophetical. They contained in all thirty-six subjects, eighteen of which belonged to the Old Testament, the rest to the New. They were all sketched, and twenty-eight were executed, for which West received in all twenty-one thousand seven hundred and five pounds. A work so varied, so extensive, and so noble in its nature, was never before undertaken by any painter. But the imagination of West was unable to cope with such glorious themes—the soft, the graceful, and the domestic, were more suited to his talents. Several of the subjects too were necessarily the same as those painted by the great masters—the Last Supper, the Crucifixion, and the Annunciation had been over and over again handled by artists higher in mental stature than West; and in the competition he had nothing to hope, and every thing to fear. He was daring in his undertakings—not so in his genius.

During the progress of these works, he painted many pictures of lesser importance. The King, the Queen, the young Princes and Princesses sat for their portraits, sometimes singly and sometimes in groups—forming in all nine pictures, for which West received two thousand guineas—a royal price when we consider the charges of Reynolds and Gainsborough at this time. They are well conceived and prettily drawn, but want soul and substance, and seem the shadows of what is noble and lovely. There is no deception—they are flat, and the eye seems to see through both colour and canvass: but time and frail materials may be mainly blameable for this.

The war which broke out between Britain and her colonies was a sore trial to the feelings of West; his early friends and his present patrons were involved in the bloody controversy. He was not, according to his own account, silent; he was too much in the palace and alone with his Majesty to avoid some allusion to the strife; the King inquired anxiously respecting the resources of his foes and the talents of their chiefs, and the artist gave, or imagined he gave, more correct information concerning the American leaders and their objects, than could be acquired through official channels. West had been long away from his native land; his literary talents were not of an order to allure correspondents, and with few, if any, of the influential insurgents can it be supposed that he was at all acquainted. But not few were the delusions under which this amiable man lived. How he contrived both to keep his place in the King's opinion, and the respect of the spirits who

stirred in the American revolution, he has not told us, but it is not difficult to guess. He was of a nature cold and unimpassioned ; his religion taught him peace, his situation whispered prudence, and the artist dismissed civil broils from his mind, and addressed himself to more profitable contemplations. He saw his reward in fortune, and perhaps in fame, for those days of toil and nights of study, in which he painted and pored over history, sacred and profane, and he closed his eyes on all else save elaborate outlines and the effect of light and shade.

He was now moving in the first circles, and the word of West was the courtly sanction in matters of taste. His various and extensive works left little leisure for the acquisition of extra-professional knowledge, and he probably thought that excellence in art was enough. By dining with divines, he had learned to skim the surface of religious knowledge, and his professional and general society gave him hints as to what was passing in the world of literature and fashion. He made the little that he did know go far ; and found means to pass with men of some discernment as a silent person of fair education, who did not wish to throw any wisdom away. The royal favour was much ; and he had besides a certain quiet air of natural dignity in his manner.

The death of Reynolds vacated the President's chair, and no one then living was more worthy to fill it than Mr. West. The fierce temper of Barry left him no chance of the honour which his genius merited. To the choice of the Academy the King gave his ready sanction, and West took his place on

the 24th of March, 1792, and delivered his inaugural address to an audience who much applauded a composition which could have cost him little thought, since it dwelt but on two topics—the excellence of British art, and the gracious benevolence of his Majesty.

The new President delivered many discourses, all more or less distinguished for plain practical sense. He pressed upon the students the value of knowledge and the necessity of study, and the uselessness of both without a corresponding aptitude of mind and buoyancy of imagination—in other words, genius. He advised them to give heart and soul wholly to art, to turn aside neither to the right nor to the left, but consider that hour lost in which a line had not been drawn nor a master-piece studied. “Observe,” he said, “with the same contemplative eye the landscape, the appearance of trees, figures dispersed around, and their aerial distance as well as lineal forms. Omit not to observe the light and shade in consequence of the sun’s rays being intercepted by clouds or other accidents. Let your mind be familiar with the characteristics of the ocean; mark its calm dignity when undisturbed by the winds, and all its various states between that and its terrible sublimity when agitated by the tempest. Sketch with attention its foaming and winding coasts, and that awful line which separates it from the heavens. Replenished with these stores, your imagination will then come forth as a river collected from little springs spreads into might and majesty. If you aspire to excellence in your profession, you must, like the industrious bee, survey the whole face of

nature and sip the sweet from every flower. When thus enriched, lay up your acquisitions for future use, and examine the great works of art to animate your feelings and to excite your emulation. When you are thus mentally enriched, and your hand practised to obey the powers of your will, you will then find your pencils or your chisels as magic wands, calling into view creations of your own to adorn your name and country."

In this way he laboured to stimulate his youthful audience; but to awaken indifference into energy—to add wings to those whose imaginations were fit for flight, and fuel to the fire of genius, required higher powers. He had no unstudied felicities of phrase, little vigour of thought, or happiness of illustration—he was cold, sensible, and instructive; and the student, who may learn from his pictures the way to manage a difficult subject, and from his life the art of employing his time, can hardly be expected to re-read his discourses.

So regular were West's hours of labour, and so carefully did he calculate his time, that to describe one day of his life is to describe years. He rose early—studied before breakfast—began to work on one of his large pictures about ten—painted with little intermission till four—washed, dressed, and saw visitors, and having dined, recommenced his studies anew. His works were chiefly historical; he dealt with the dead; and the solitude of his gallery was seldom invaded by the rich or the great, clamouring for their portraits. Visitors sometimes found their way to his inner study while he had the pencil in his hand; he had no wish to show

off his skill to the idle, and generally sat as silent and motionless on such occasions as one of his own Apostles. His words were few, his manner easy ; his quakerlike sobriety seemed little elevated by intercourse with nobles and waiting-gentlewomen. On the Windsor pictures he expended much study, and to render them worthy of their place, he “ trimmed,” as he told the King, “ his midnight lamp.” So closely was he imprisoned by their composition, that his attendance at the burial of so eminent a brother as Gainsborough was mentioned as something extraordinary.

It must not be supposed that he enjoyed without envy the threefold blessing of magnificent subjects, high prices, and kingly favour. Barry was famishing, and his complaints were loud and eloquent. Fuseli, with all his wit, learning, and imagination, could barely live ; and Opie had been taught the severe, though common lesson, that nothing is so unstable as the patronage of the powerful. The very calmness and moderation with which the King’s historical painter carried himself was something provoking. He went from his gallery in Newman-street to Windsor, and back again, with the staid looks of one of the brethren going to, and returning from, chapel. Of his importance at Court, however, he was willing enough to speak, though in a mild and meek way ; and as to high matters in general he affected somewhat of the vague diplomatic language of official men : West had probably no state secrets to conceal—if he had, his conversation kept them a mystery.

When he succeeded to the President’s chair, the King wished to confer upon him the distinction of

knighthood. To lay the royal sword on the shoulder of a Quaker was something new, and the curiosity of the courtiers was excited. The Duke of Gloucester called on West from the King, to inquire if this honour would be acceptable. "No man," said Benjamin, "entertains a higher respect for political honours and distinctions than myself, but I really think I have earned greater eminence by my pencil already than knighthood could confer on me. The chief value of titles is to preserve in families a respect for those principles by which such distinctions were originally obtained—but simple knighthood to a man who is at least as well known as he could ever hope to be from that honour, is not a legitimate object of ambition. To myself then your Royal Highness must perceive the title could add no dignity, and as it would perish with myself, it could add none to my family. But were I possessed of fortune, independent of my profession, sufficient to enable my posterity to maintain the rank, I think that, with my hereditary descent and the station I occupy among artists, a more permanent title might become a desirable object. As it is, however, that cannot be; and I have been thus explicit with your Royal Highness that no misconception may exist on the subject." The Duke took West by the hand, and said, "You have justified the opinion which the King has of you; he will be delighted with your answer."

In that answer there was certainly very little of the Quaker. Possibly he was not without hope that the King would confer a baronetcy, and an income to support it, on one who, to descent from the Lords of Delaware, could add such claims of

personal importance. No farther notice, however, was taken of the matter ; he went to the palace as usual, and as usual his reception was warm and friendly.

From 1769 till 1801 West had uniformly received all orders for pictures from his Majesty in person. They had settled the subject and price between them without the intervention of others, and, in addition to his one thousand pounds a year paid on account, he had received whatever more, and it was not much, might be due upon the pictures actually painted. A great change was near. A mental cloud fell upon the King, and the artist was the first to be made sensible that the sceptre was departed from his hand. The doors of the palace, which heretofore had opened spontaneously like those of Milton's Paradise, no longer flew wide at his approach, but turned on their hinges grating and reluctantly. What this might mean he was informed by Mr. Wyatt, the royal architect, who called and said, he was authorized to inform him that the pictures painting for the Chapel at Windsor must be suspended till further orders. "This extraordinary proceeding (says Galt) rendered the studies of the best part of the artist's life useless, and deprived him of that honourable provision, the fruit of his talents and industry, on which he had counted for the repose of his declining years. For some time it affected him deeply, and he was at a loss what steps to take. At last, however, on reflecting on the marked friendship and favour which the King had always shown him, he addressed to his Majesty a letter, of which the following is a copy of the rough draught, being the

only one preserved." After mentioning the message to suspend the paintings for the Chapel, it proceeds—

" Since 1797 I have finished three pictures, begun several others, and composed the remainder of the subjects for the Chapel, on the progress of Revealed Religion. Those are subjects so replete with dignity of character and expression, as demanded the historian, the commentator, and the accomplished painter to bring them into view. Your Majesty's gracious commands for my pencil on that extensive subject stimulated my humble abilities, and I commenced the work with zeal and enthusiasm. Animated by your commands, I burnt my midnight lamp to attain that polish which marks my scriptural pictures. Your Majesty's zeal for religion and love of the elegant arts are known over the civilized world, and your protection of my pencil had given it celebrity, and made mankind anxiously look for the completion of the great work on Revealed Religion. In the station which I fill in the Academy I have been zealous in promoting merit; ingenious artists have received my ready aid, and my galleries and my purse have been opened to their studies and their distresses. The breath of envy or the whisper of detraction never defiled my lips, nor the want of morality my character; and your Majesty's virtues and those of her Majesty, have been the theme of my admiration for many years.

" I feel with great concern the suspension of the work on Revealed Religion—if it is meant to be permanent, myself and the fine arts have much to lament. To me it will be ruinous, and it will damp

the hope of patronage in the more refined departments of painting. I have this consolation, that in the thirty-five years during which my pencil has been honoured with your commands, a great body of historical and scriptural works have been placed in the churches and palaces of the kingdom. Their professional claims may be humble, but similar works have not been executed before by any of your Majesty's subjects. And this I will assert, that your commands and patronage were not laid on a lazy or an ungrateful man, or an undutiful subject."

To this letter, written on the 26th of September, 1801, and carried to the court by Wyatt, West received no answer. On his Majesty's recovery, he sought and obtained a private audience. The King had not been made acquainted with the order for suspending the works, nor had he received the letter. "Go on with your work, West," said the King kindly, "go on with the pictures, and I will take care of you." He shook him by the hand, and dismissed him. "And this," says Galt, "was the last interview he was permitted to have with his early and constant, and to him truly royal, patron. But he continued to execute the pictures, and, in the usual quarterly payments, received his £1000 per annum till his Majesty's final superannuation; when, without any intimation whatever, on calling to receive it, he was told it had been stopt, and that the paintings for the Chapel, of Revealed Religion, had been suspended. He submitted in silence—he neither remonstrated nor complained."

The story of his dismissal from court was spread  
VOL. II. E

abroad with many aggravations ; and the malevolence of enemies which his success had created—there are always such reptiles—was gratified by the circulation of papers detailing an account of the prices which the fortunate painter had received for his works from the King. The hand which had drawn up this injurious document neglected to state that the sum of thirty-four thousand one hundred and eighty-seven pounds was earned in the course of thirty-three laborious years : and the public, looking only to the sum at the bottom of the page, imagined that West must have amassed a fortune. This notion was dispelled by an accurate statement of work done and money received, with day and date, signed with the artist's name, and accompanied by a formal declaration of its truth ; a needless addition, for all who knew any thing of West, knew him to be one of the most honourable of men.

Whilst suffering under the neglect of the court, the peace of Amiens opened the continent, and thither West went, to see with his own eyes the splendid works of the pencil and chisel, which Buonaparte had assembled in the Louvre. The President of the British Academy was not to be overlooked by the wily politicians who surrounded the future emperor. Minister after minister, and artist after artist, from the accomplished Talleyrand and the subtle Fouché to the enthusiastic Dénon and the ferocious David, gathered around him, and talked, with unbounded love, of historical painting and of its influence on mankind. In a series of entertainments, in which wine and flattery were poured out abundantly, the enemies of his country

succeeded in persuading the simple Benjamin that they were the most philanthropic of all nations, and their master the kindest and worthiest of men.

Filled with these fine notions, West one day came up to Mr. Fox and Sir Francis Baring, as they were strolling about the Louvre, and harangued them on the sublime and benevolent views of Napoleon, who only conquered kingdoms out of love for liberty, and collected pictures in the towns which he stormed, "to furnish models of study for artists of all nations." He concluded by pointing out the propriety, even in a mercantile point of view of encouraging to a seven-fold extent the higher departments of art in England. The prospect of commercial advantages pleased Baring, and Fox said with much frankness, and with that sincerity which lasts at least for the moment, "I have been rocked in the cradle of politics, and never before was so much struck with the advantages, even in a political bearing, of the Fine Arts, to the prosperity as well as to the renown of a kingdom; and I do assure you, Mr. West, if ever I have it in my power to influence our government to promote the Arts, the conversation which we have had to-day shall not be forgotten." They parted, and West returned to England.

Old age was now coming on him; but his grey hairs were denied the repose which a life of virtue and labour deserved. He took it into his head that he was looked upon coldly by the government for his admiration of Buonaparte; and assailed in the Academy by an opposition strong in numbers and in eloquence, in which Shee distinguished himself, he was induced to retire from the

President's chair, and Wyatt was elected in his stead. This distinction the court architect had merited by no works which could be weighed in the balance with the worst of his predecessor's; and West persuaded himself that his own splendid reception in France had been the root of all the evil. He certainly had a very lofty notion of himself, and his account of the stir which he excited in Paris, marks a mind amiably but extravagantly vain. "Wherever I went," he said, "men looked at me, and ministers and people of influence in the state were constantly in my company. I was one day in the Louvre—all eyes were upon me ; and I could not help observing to Charles Fox, *who happened to be walking with me*, how strong was the love of art, and admiration of its professors, in France." This trait of simplicity will never be surpassed.

In a short time, however, the Academy became weary of Wyatt, displaced him, and restored the painter, by a vote which may be called unanimous ; since there was only one dissenting member—supposed to be Fuseli—who put in the name of Mrs. Moser for President. Ladies were at that period permitted to be members, and the jester no doubt meant to insinuate that a shrewd old woman was a fit rival for West.

The restored President now endeavoured to form a national association for the encouragement of works of dignity and importance, and was cheered with the assurance of ministerial if not royal patronage. But many of those who countenanced the design were cautious and timid men, deficient in that lofty enthusiasm necessary for

success in grand undertakings, and whose souls were not large enough to conceive and consummate a plan worthy of the rank and genius of a nation. The times, too, were unfavourable: Englishmen had in those days need enough to think of other matters than paintings and statues. Mr. Pitt, who had really seemed disposed to lend his aid to this new association, soon died. Mr. Fox, who succeeded him, declared, "As soon as I am firmly seated in the saddle, I shall redeem the promise I made in the Louvre"—but he also was soon lost to his country. The pistol of an assassin prevented Perceval from taking into consideration a third memorial, which West had drawn up, and the President at last relinquished the project in despair.\*

West was now sixty-four years old—a life blameless and temperate had kept his strength unimpaired, and he had still the same composed and determined mind by which he was distinguished in his youth. He had also unbounded confidence in his own powers, and since the illness of his royal friend had closed the doors of the palace against him, he resolved to try once more his fortune with the public. He accordingly commenced painting a series of Scriptural subjects upon a large scale: and the first which appeared was that of "Christ healing the Sick." The history of this picture deserves to be told. The Quakers of Philadelphia requested West to aid them in erecting an hospital for the sick in his na-

\* The British Institution was formed out of the wreck of West's magnificent plan.

tive town—he told them his circumstances scarcely admitted of his being generous, but he would aid them after his own way, and paint them a picture, if they would provide a place to receive it in their new building. They were pleased with this, and “Christ healing the Sick” was painted for Philadelphia. When exhibited in London, the crush to see it was very great—the praise it obtained was high—and the British Institution offered him three thousand guineas for the work : West accepted the offer, for he was far from being rich,—but on condition that he should be allowed to make a copy, with alterations, for his native place. He did so ; and when the copy went to America, the profits arising from its exhibition enabled the committee of the hospital to enlarge the building and receive more patients.

The success of this piece impressed West with the belief that his genius appeared to most advantage in pictures of large dimensions, and that royal commissions had hitherto interposed between him and fortune. His mind, from long contemplation, was familiar with subjects of gigantic proportions ; and he had soon sketched out several, and finished some. But the little snug and comfortable houses of England could not contain this colossal progeny ; the doors of our churches are generally opened to art with reluctance—our palaces had already admitted more of the President’s works than, perhaps, were welcome ; and the owners of our galleries were unwilling to make room for such enormous pieces on Scripture subjects. There was no market for the manufacture. Few were tempted to become purchasers, though many were

edified with the "Descent of the Holy Ghost on Christ at the Jordan," ten feet by fourteen—"The Crucifixion," sixteen feet by twenty-eight—"The Ascension," twelve feet by eighteen—and "The Inspiration of St. Peter," of corresponding extent. As old age benumbed his faculties, and began to freeze up the well-spring of original thought, the daring intrepidity of the man seemed but to grow and augment. Immense pictures, embracing topics which would have alarmed loftier spirits, came crowding thick upon his fancy, and he was the only person who appeared insensible that such were too weighty for his handling.

Domestic sorrow, mingled with professional disappointment. Elizabeth Shewell—for more than fifty years his kind and tender companion—died on the 6th of December, 1817, and West, seventy-nine years old, felt that he was soon to follow. His wife and he had loved each other some sixty years—had seen their children's children—and the world had no compensation to offer. He began to sink, and though still to be found at his easel, his hand had lost its early alacrity. It was evident that all this was to cease soon; that he was suffering a slow, and a general, and easy decay. The venerable old man sat in his study among his favourite pictures, a breathing image of piety and contentment, awaiting calmly the hour of his dissolution. Without any fixed complaint, his mental faculties unimpaired, his cheerfulness unclipsed, and with looks serene and benevolent, he expired 11th March, 1820, in the eighty-second year of his age. He was buried beside Reynolds, Opie, and Barry, in St. Paul's Cathedral. The

pall was borne by noblemen, ambassadors, and academicians; his two sons and grandson were chief mourners; and sixty coaches brought up the splendid proœession.

Benjamin West was in person above the middle size, of a fair complexion, and firmly and compactly built. His serene brow betokened command of temper, whilst his eyes, sparkling and vivacious, promised lively remarks and pointed sayings, in which he by no means abounded. Intercourse with courts and with the world, which changes so many, made no change in his sedate sobriety of sentiment and happy propriety of manner, the results of a devout domestic education. His kindness to young artists was great—his liberality seriously impaired his income—he never seemed weary of giving advice—intrusion never disturbed his temper—nor could the tediousness of the dull ever render him either impatient or peevish. He was indeed friendly to all—and particularly kind to two artists who have since risen to high distinction—Chantrey and Martin. For the former he obtained the statue of Washington, erected at Boston; and to the latter he willingly disclosed the secrets of his profession, and cheered him by his approbation. Whatever he knew in art he readily imparted—he was always happy to think that art was advancing, and no mean jealousy of other men's good fortune ever invaded his repose. His vanity was amusing and amiable—and his belief—prominent in every page of the narrative which he dictated to his friend Mr. Galt—that preaching and prophecy had predestined him to play a great part before mankind, and be an example to all

posterity; did no one any harm, and himself some good.

As his life was long and laborious, his productions are very numerous. He painted and sketched in oil upwards of four hundred pictures, mostly of an historical and religious nature, and he left more than two hundred original drawings in his portfolio. His works were supposed by himself, and for a time by others, to be in the true spirit of the great masters, and he composed them with the serious ambition and hope of illustrating Scripture and rendering Gospel truth more impressive. No subject seemed to him too lofty for his pencil; he considered himself worthy to follow the sublimest flights of the prophets, and dared to limn the effulgence of God's glory and the terrors of the Day of Judgment. The mere list of his works makes us shudder at human presumption—Moses receiving the Law on Sinai—the Descent of the Holy Ghost on the Saviour in the Jordan—the Opening of the Seventh Seal in the Revelations—Saint Michael and his Angels casting out the Great Dragon—the mighty Angel with one foot on sea and the other on earth—the Resurrection!—and there are many others of the same class! With such magnificence and sublimity who but a Michael Angelo could cope?

In all his works the human form was exhibited in conformity to academic precepts—his figures were arranged with skill—the colouring was varied and often harmonious—the eye rested pleased on the performance, and the artist seemed, to the ordinary spectator, to have done his task like one of the highest of the sons of genius. But below all

this splendour there was little of the true vitality—there was a monotony, too, of human character—the groupings were unlike the happy and careless combinations of nature, and the figures frequently seemed distributed over the canvass by line and measure, like trees in a plantation. He wanted fire and imagination to be the true restorer of that grand style, which bewildered Barry, and was talked of by Reynolds. Some of his works—cold, formal, bloodless, and passionless—may remind the spectator of the sublime vision of the Valley of dry bones, when the flesh and skin had come upon the skeletons, and before the breath of God had informed them with life and feeling.

Though such is the general impression, which the works of West make, it cannot be denied that many are distinguished by great excellence. In his *Death on the Pale Horse*, and more particularly in the sketch of that picture, he has more than approached the masters and princes of the calling. It is, indeed, irresistibly fearful to see the triumphant march of the terrific Phantom, and the dissolution of all that earth is proud of beneath his tread. War and peace, sorrow and joy, youth and age, all who love and all who hate, seem planet-struck. The *Death of Wolfe*, too, is natural and noble, and the Indian chief, like the Oneyda warrior of Campbell,

A stoic of the woods, a man without a tear,  
was a happy thought. The *Battle of La Hogue*  
I have heard praised as *the best* historic picture  
of the British school, by one not likely to be mis-  
taken, and who would not say what he did not

feel. Many of his single figures, also, are of a high order. There is a natural grace in the looks of some of his women, which few painters have ever excelled.

West was injured by early success—he obtained his fame too easily—it was not purchased by long study and many trials—and he rashly imagined himself capable of anything. But the coldness of his imagination nipt the blossoms of history. It is the province of art to elevate the subject in the spirit of its nature—and brooding over the whole with the feeling of a poet, awaken the scene into vivid life and heroic beauty; but such mastery rarely waited upon the ambition of this amiable and upright man.

---

## JAMES BARRY.

---

JAMES BARRY was born in Cork, on the 11th of October, 1741. His mother's maiden name was Juliana Roerden; her ancestors had lost large estates in the county Cork, through rebellions and revolutions; "and his father, whose name was John," says one of his biographers, "had no occasion to blush at his pedigree, if it be true, that he was of a collateral branch of the family, which has been honoured with the Earldom of Barrymore." Whatever his remote ancestors were, we are certain that John Barry was bred a builder; that his want of success drove him to the sea; that, for many years, he commanded a vessel which traded between the Cove of Cork and England; and that he was fortunate in none of his pursuits.

Of the early education of James Barry we have but an imperfect account; but it must have been watched over with no common care, for, in after-life, when learning was wanted, no one found him deficient. When very young his father took him to sea; but to be pent up in a floating prison—to see the same monotonous scene setting upon him at night, and opening upon him every day, and to drudge and become familiar with the severe duties of a mariner's life, were not for one on whose mind art had already dawned. In the first place



he ran away, and was with difficulty found and brought back; and secondly, instead of handing ropes and adjusting sails, it was his pleasure to make sketches of the coast along which he sailed, or to draw groups and single figures upon the deck, to the amusement of the sailors and the vexation of his father. It was idle to contend against the determined disposition of this wilful boy; his father sent him back to his mother, and he resumed his books and crayons. In the happier moments of his manhood he has been heard to allude jocularly to his marine apprenticeship.

Painting was the natural rather than the accidental direction of his mind—he sketched and drew at an earlier age than his sister, who long survived him, could name. When the father returned and saw his son's colossal outlines in black and red chalk, on walls, floors, and furniture, the rough sailor spoke with great bitterness, and said, the boy had abandoned a trade which produced daily bread, for wild and unprofitable nonsense. He sought shelter behind his mother's chair, who protected him, and encouraged him in his pursuits.

On leaving the sea he was sent to school—where his quickness of parts, and his stubborn and solitary disposition attracted notice. During the hours of leisure he read or drew. Whole nights, his sister said, were taken from sleep; he spent all his pocket money on pencils and candles; and when, alarmed for his health, the servants, in arranging his room, secreted his candles, he would not allow them to go there any more, but locked the door and made the bed for himself. His bed became hard and uncomfortable—his mother

wished to render it softer, and to introduce order into his apartment—but he resisted her also; even in these early days he exhibited a spirit intractable and capricious, and declared his love for those ascetic and self-denying habits which assume the name of virtues in the legends of the Romish church.

He sometimes, however, mingled in school-boy amusements; and on one of those occasions, wishing to conceal himself from his companions in the favourite game called “*Hide and Seek*,” he entered a ruinous house in an obscure lane, which had neither doors nor windows, and was said to be haunted. On running up the half-rotten stairs, and entering an upper room, he saw two old and withered figures sitting in rags and wretchedness beside a handful of expiring embers, tearing each other’s faces, and accompanying every tug with grimaces which demons might have envied. They heeded him not, but tore away, and he retired, making, he said, two reflections on what he had seen—“That man is malicious in proportion as he is impotent,” and “that age and want add to their inherent miseries evils all their own.” The moral inference which he seeks to draw from this sad scene is unjust to human nature. The evils, indeed, of weakness and want are not little; they are an ill-matched pair, though often seen together; but weakness of body is frequently accompanied by great benevolence of mind, and there is a philosophic or devout spirit of endurance in those afflicted with poverty and old age, which Barry might have discovered wherever he went on the earth. But from his earliest years he indulged in curious

opinions, and affected singularity of dress—as those often do who are resolved to become noticed for *something*. He sought the company only of the old and the educated—listened to all they said—showed anxiety after knowledge—and wore a garb so coarse and so plain, that it seemed as if he were suffering under a rule of religious mortification. His school-fellows considered his learning so extraordinary, that, in letters yet extant, they speak of him as a prodigy of knowledge, from whom they were accustomed to receive opinions as from a master.

His mother, a zealous Catholic, and whose affection for the old faith was increased by a sense of the loss of family wealth and importance, exercised a strong and a lasting influence over him. His father, a Protestant, committed all domestic matters to his wife, and probably thought of doctrinal disputes with the lightness of a sailor: she, in her turn, committed her son to the care and conversation of two Catholic priests, who, to learning, added the zeal which thirsts for proselytes—and that enthusiasm which, directed with prudence against the youthful and the imaginative, is sure to triumph. He was artfully involved in the mazes of religious controversy, and had to seek his way out in the company of those who coveted his conversion—other temptations were held out, of notice and preferment, and he was soon hailed as a stray sheep won back to the fold. A report was diligently circulated that his learning and talents were to be dedicated to the service of the suffering church; but as soon as he had openly

committed himself as a Catholic, his nomination to the priesthood was heard of no more.

To the Romish church he was much attached in youth, but his residence in Rome made him waver not a little. There he saw more than he wished to have seen, and was about to seek refuge from superstition in infidelity, when he was saved, as he always acknowledged, by a book sent to him by Edmund Burke. The work which did this good deed was that precious one—"Butler's Analogy of Religion, natural and revealed, to the constitution and course of nature." In after-life he rewarded the author by placing him high amongst those divines whom he admitted into his painting of Elysium. But he was far too ardent and unbalanced to remain steady at the wholesome point of belief where Bishop Butler had left him. He became, as life advanced and vexations thickened, a blind and bigoted follower of the creed of Rome, and somewhat stern and uncharitable towards those who differed from him in matters of faith: but we are anticipating.

When he was some twelve or fifteen years old—tradition is no accurate observer of dates—a bookseller in Cork had such confidence in his powers, that he employed him to make the designs—some add the etchings—for a small volume of tales which he was publishing. Of these, if they ever existed, no account is given, and the book has been sought for in vain; nor, indeed, is there any precise information to be had concerning the subjects which employed his boyish pencil: he probably retained his sketches till ripening judgment

condemned them, and then committed to the fire those witnesses of an undisciplined hand and an ill-regulated fancy. Having no one to guide him in art as he had to mislead him in religion, he had to grope his own way to excellence, and attain it as he best might. We know that ere he left Cork, he had painted in oil colour, "Eneas escaping from the burning of Troy,"—"A dead Christ,"—"Susanna and the Elders,"—"Daniel in the Lions' Den,"—and "Abraham's Sacrifice;" but whether these were copies or original compositions it is not mentioned. Such subjects are frequently chosen by young and presumptuous men, who imagine that it is grand and daring to single out a sublime or splendid scene from history or poetry—they have yet to learn, and they will soon discover it, that a lofty subject requires to be nobly handled. Those early attempts of Barry were long afterwards to be seen on the walls of his father's house.

His name had not yet been heard of beyond Cork ; it was soon to be known in remote parts, and received with a favour which must have fallen on Barry like a shower upon a summer drought. There is a tradition in the Irish Church concerning the conversion of a king of Cashel by the eloquence of St. Patrick. The barbarian prince, when the apostle concluded his exhortation, called loudly to be baptized, and such was the hurry of the one, and the fortitude of the other, that though the Saint, implanting his iron-shod crozier in the ground, struck it unwittingly through the royal convert's foot, he uttered not one murmur, nor yet moved a muscle, but conceiving it to be a part

of the ceremony, stood and was baptized. "The moment of baptism," says Dr. Fryer, "rendered so critical and awful by the circumstances of the king's foot being pierced with the spear, is that which Mr. Barry chose for the display of his art; and few stories, it is presumed, have been selected with greater felicity, or with greater scope for the skill and ingenuity of the artist. The heroic patience of the king, the devotional abstraction of the saint, and the mixed emotions of the spectators, form a combined and comprehensive model of imitation, and convey a suitable idea of the genius of one, who, self-instructed, and at nineteen, conceived the execution of so grand a design."

With this work in his hand, Barry went to Dublin, and placed it among the paintings collecting for exhibition by the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce. He was at this time utterly unfriended and unknown, coarsely clad, and with something of the stamp of one enduring poverty upon him. The picture was exhibited and admired; but so little was such a work expected from a native artist, that when the name of the painter was demanded, and he stept modestly forward, no one would believe him—his brow glowed, he burst into tears, and hurried out of the room. All this was observed by Edmund Burke, one of the greatest and best-hearted of all the sons of genius. He sought the young artist out, commended and encouraged him, laid down the natural rules of composition, and directed his attention to what was pure and poetical. One of those incidents which biographers love to relate, and the world indulgently believes, is said to have

happened at the very first interview between those two youthful adventurers. They had plunged into controversy in the first hour of their friendship, and Barry, in aid of his argument, quoted a passage from the *Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful*, then published without the author's name. Burke refused to bow to the authority of a performance which he called slight and unsubstantial, and the fiery Barry exclaimed, "Do you call that a slight and unsubstantial work which is conceived in the spirit of nature and truth—is written with such elegance, and strewn all over with the richness of poetic fancy? I could not afford to buy the work, Sir, and transcribed it every word with my own hand." Burke smiled, and acknowledged himself the author. "Are you, by God!" exclaimed Barry, embracing him, and holding out the copy which he had made of the work. Such is the story. Burke was well known to be the author, and enjoyed the reputation, of the *Essay*, before his name was attached to it; and if Barry had taken the trouble to transcribe the work, it does not seem likely that he should have carried the copy in his pocket. Still, we must not too rashly apply to such a person, the rules by which we are entitled to judge in matters concerning the ordinary brethren of the race.

He continued to reside for some time in Dublin. The way to fame, and perhaps fortune, lay open before him. Burke had praised his works, and assured him of his protection, and he had only to walk circumspectly, and act with prudence, to become an honour to his native land. Dr. Sleigh, of Cork, an early and benevolent friend, congratu-

lating him on having met with that countenance in Dublin which he had sought and merited in vain in his native city, counselled a journey to Rome, and the study of Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton. This was not lost on Barry. "To Dr. Sleigh," he used to say, "I am indebted for whatever education and fortune and fame I may have in the world." Sudden success unsettled him for a time; the fame of his work brought a crowd of those unsafe companions who clap their hands at the sight of a new favourite of fortune, and flutter about the prodigy like moths round a candle. In their company he sometimes forgot himself; he was sensible of the folly, and on his way home from a deep carouse, determined on immediate amendment. This fit of repentance found him at the side of the Liffy; he stood and upbraided his own easiness of temper, and cursed the money in his pocket as a fiend that had tempted him to the tavern. He threw his purse into the river, ran home, and resumed his interrupted studies. He afterwards related this to an outspoken friend. "Ah Barry! man," said he, "you threw away your luck—you never had either gold or good temper to spare afterwards."

In his twenty-third year he went to London, on the invitation of Burke, who introduced him to Athenian Stuart, whose talk confirmed him in his love of the ancients, and to Sir Joshua Reynolds, in whose works he studied delicacy of style, propriety of character, and force of light and shade. "If I should chance to have genius, or any thing else," he observes, in a letter to Dr. Sleigh, "it is so much the better; but my hopes are grounded

upon an unwearied intense application, of which I am not sparing. At present I have little to show that I value ; my work is all under ground, digging and laying foundations, which, with God's assistance, I may hereafter find the use of. I every day centre more and more upon the art ; I give myself totally to it : and, except honour and conscience, am determined to renounce everything else. Though this may appear enthusiastic, or rather extravagant, it is really the state of my mind." Nothing great can ever be accomplished without enthusiasm ; but it requires to be a little better regulated than poor Barry's. For the most part his notions of other men's talents were at this early period equally decided and just. "The colouring of Wilson is very masterly," he observes, in one of his letters, "his style of design is more grand, more consistent, and more poetical than any other person's amongst us." His admiration, however, was not always so well placed ; he praised the Achilles and Patroclus of Hamilton, for which he was rebuked by some of the elder brethren of the brush. He gave them a tasting of his spirit in two or three sarcastic sentences, in which he vindicated his right to freedom of opinion. They shrugged their shoulders, looked on one another, were irritated, and were silenced.

Barry pursued his studies in London for a year. The presence and the society of Burke awed down the natural sharpness of his temper, and in his company he began to practise the courtesies of polished life, and appeared in a dress becoming the station to which he aspired. He had already determined to be a historical painter. The true

nature of that style could never, in the opinion of Reynolds, be ascertained, without a visit to the Sistine Chapel; but such a pilgrimage could not be accomplished by one so poor as Barry, and he was in despair—when Burke generously interposed, fitted him out for his journey, and settled an annual pension upon him during the period of probationary study.

On his way through France, he admired and copied the Alexander drinking the Potion, by La Sueur, and visited the Academy of St. Luke, on which he remarks to Burke, “ I don’t like an academy; it is a thing, which, wherever it is founded, will, I think, bring the arts into contempt, and, consequently, to destruction. We have two of them here; there are such mobs of blackguards go every night to acquire a trade there, as is enough to shock any one who has the least regard for the art. People send their children to make them painters and statuaries, without learning or genius, or indeed any thing else, only because it is less expensive than making them peruquiers or shoemakers.” With better sense, he continues, “ drawing and modelling in the academy, with the assistance of a master, is not likely to mislead any one, and must be useful to men of real genius.” He was so much charmed with the people and the scenery of Burgundy, that he stopped at an inn and wrote to Burke; “ *We* may talk as much as we please about cultivation and plenty; but I must honestly confess I never before saw any thing but the faint glimmerings of it, compared with this land, where nature seems ambitious of doing every thing for herself. The peo-

ple, who are extremely numerous, are, for the most part, amply employed in the gathering and storing of fruits. Methinks, without any great poetic license, it is somewhat probable, when Bacchus made his rounds of the earth, that his head-quarters must have been in one of the val- lies of Burgundy, where, on every side, mountain peeps over mountain, and appears clothed in the varied hues of the vine, interspersed with sheep and corn. This, and the crowds of busy con- tented people, who cover the whole face of the country, make a strong but melancholy contrast to a miserable isle which I cannot help thinking of sometimes—you will not be at a loss to know that I mean Ireland."

At Rome, Barry found letters awaiting him, containing the agreeable assurance that his *Alexander* and the *Potion*, which he had presented to Burke, was pronounced by Reynolds correct in drawing, and in expression just and noble. In the lustre of colouring Barry never excelled, and the President was silent concerning that matter; he counselled, however, the constant study of Michael Angelo; to the Sistine Chapel the young painter hastened accordingly; and the following are some of his observations. "The deep knowledge of the ancients in anatomy, is, I think, as observable in the *Apollo* and the *Antinous*, as it is in the *Laocoön* and the *Torso*, whose flesh is of a more rigid texture: and the disappearing of the muscles as the figure approaches the delicate, is the consequence of as certain observations and principles as their introduction would be in a figure of a dif- ferent character. The knowledge, freedom and

greatness of style in drawing, are, I think, the only part of the character of Michael Angelo which has been well understood. It has been, and is every day observed, that notwithstanding the number of figures in the Last Judgment, there is but one character of body placed in a vast diversity of attitudes, the model of which is said to have been his porter. It is not so literally the case, though I believe he might have intended it, in conformity to a prevailing opinion that at the Resurrection all bodies will be of the same age and character. I do not think the expression of countenance, either in him or Raphael, indicate in a very clear and particular manner, the intentions and state of mind of the persons to whom this countenance is given."

His letters, his conversation, his skill in drawing, his enthusiasm and poetic imagination, had raised high expectations in the minds of English friends. They thought with satisfaction of the rich opportunities now before him, and of the use such a man must make of them—but unfortunately controversy was his chief delight; and of this he soon found enough to satisfy a whole academy. It happened that Rome, at this period, was visited by one of those gentlemen who, with a little income, a little learning, a little knowledge of art and a full capacity for speech, wander from gallery to gallery, delivering opinions upon works of genius with a confidence which passes with the world for the offspring of refined taste and profound knowledge. Against this person the Irish impetuosity of Barry precipitated him at once. "As he is a man of great civility," thus he writes

to Burke, “ I never would have thought of contradicting him, had I not seen clearly into the drift and tendency of his frequent hints of the incapacity of the people at Rome, and that a nod from him would set his dependents to tear up and trample on every thing we hold sacred. Reynolds could not draw—his colouring was white, was blue, was red, was every thing that would damn him; he stole what he had, and mangled what he stole. Gainsborough’s landscapes were mere nosegays; and West, who was so much the fashion, afforded a convincing proof that drawing was not sought after, and that a true idea of art was wanting.”

To confute such a sweeping censure as this, Barry could bring knowledge and sense; but he was deficient in that courtesy and graciousness of manner which takes the sting out of contradiction. He was vehement, and he was incensed: nor did he seek to conceal his indignation; the consequences are clearly described by his own pen:—“ I had no sooner attempted to excuse our artists from these aspersions—but I was immediately pointed out as a person who, not coinciding with the designs of the dealers, might be dangerous in the company of English cavaliers, where it was necessary every now and then to run into the praises of an indifferent antique head, with a modern body and legs cobbled to it, or of an old picture, which they christen in the name of this or that master, and which has no other merit but that—as nothing is visible, nothing can be objected to it. As the English have much money to lay out in virtù, and as they have perhaps a greater pas-

sion for the ancients than they have, generally speaking, judgment to distinguish among them, those in whose hands they fall here, and to whom their commissions are sent, take care to provide heads with bodies and legs, and *vice versa*. Fragments of all the gods are jumbled together, legs and heads of fairies and graces, till a monster is produced. Though for the most part intrigue and mercenary ways are prevalent here, truth is never without a witness."

All this was honest, intrepid, and imprudent. His fame was yet to make, and his character was much in those men's power, and he was made to feel it. Sly old antiquarians cunningly inveigled him into conversation, and exhibited him to the English travellers as, heated with controversy, he threw his sarcasms, right and left, among all who sold and all who purchased busts without heads and daubings of the dark masters. This consumed his time, took his attention from study, and invaded that tranquillity of mind which is so necessary for all noble pursuits. In the midst of these distractions, a long and friendly letter from Sir Joshua Reynolds sought to reclaim him from disputation, and bind him heartily to Michael Angelo and Raphael. "If you should not relish their works at first," said the President, "which may probably be the case, as they have none of those qualities which are captivating at first sight, never cease looking till you find something like inspiration come over you, till you think every other painter insipid in comparison, and to be admired only for petty excellencies."

Barry failed to discover in the compositions of

these illustrious masters the entire proportion, and grace, and simplicity, of the Grecian sculpture. He was too ardent in his nature to keep this belief to himself ; he preached this unheard-of heresy in Rome, with the fervour of a devotee ; and thus unbosomed himself to Burke. "I see," he said, "in no part of Raphael's works any figure that I may call truly and correctly beautiful, like the Antinous, or the Venus of Medici—or any that is truly good, like the bust of Alexander—or sublime, like the Apollo. As to the Torso, the Laocoön, and such like characters, he appears not at all qualified to succeed in them. As to his cartoons and his pictures in the Vatican, they may be more expressive of the passions, and may be more correct in a mediocrity of character—a little more than that which comes into any of those works, or even into his Transfiguration. Michael Angelo appears still less near the standard than Raphael. He is infinitely above Raphael in knowledge and correctness, yet his ostentation and show of this, and Raphael's art of concealing—with choice of subject and pleasing well-wrought draperies—his want of it, bring them nearly to a level, at least with the bulk of mankind ; yet I rather believe fewer people have attained Michael Angelo's merits than Raphael's, though no one has come near Raphael upon the whole."

Barry loved simple beauty of form. Reynolds admired the splendid effects of light and shade. The former saw and worshipped in the marbles of Greece a severe and dignified grandeur, all attained without startling attitudes or violent motion : the latter discovered the perfection of art in the pro-

fuse draperies, imposing effects, and quiet grace of Angelo and Raphael. These two men were in their natures essentially dissimilar, and looked upon the works of the great masters with very different eyes. How Sir Joshua received the account of Barry's heresy concerning Michael Angelo we are not informed, but we gather from a letter, addressed to him soon afterwards, that Barry was unwilling to be suspected of coldness or indifference concerning the glories of the Sistine Chapel. But poor Barry was an indifferent dissembler : his raptures were felt to be artificial : the President shrugged his shoulders, as was his custom, and never advised him more.

In the third year of his residence in Rome, he made an excursion to Naples. "At Nitri, a miserable little town in the Neapolitan territory," he says in one of his letters, "are monuments which gave me heartfelt pleasure. One is a piece of raw hide, a little broader than the sole of the foot, tied on in the manner of the ancient sandal. I bought a pair of them, which I will put on, to show you the villainy of our cursed Gothic shoes, which, by the line which the termination of the upper leather makes upon the stocking, cuts off the foot from the leg, and loses that fine idea of one limb which is kept up in this vestige of a sandal. Another monument is the manner of tying up the hair of the women. I gave one of them money—made drawings of it—loosed it, and made drawings again—so that I know everything about it, and shall be of great use to the ladies when I come home. Blessed be the poverty of this people, and long may it continue to their posterity ! it has preserved to

them, though in a state of ignorance, the elegant notions of their forefathers : it has kept it out of their power to flaunt about after the deliriums and new-fangled whims of fashionable people in great cities ; and you shall not be able in your Londons, your Parises and Romes, to cull me out such an object as one of these women standing near a fountain, with her sweet antique-formed vase on her head. At Naples also is to be seen the same way of tying up the hair as in many bustos—the cloth which lies across it in other heads of antiquity, and the reta, net or cap, inclosing all ; and even without quitting the vulgar women of Naples, I will show you amongst them all the different head-dresses of the Nine Muses. I find the love of antiquity growing upon me every day."

After a brief interval, fatigued with studying from the antique, with discovering resemblances between the dresses of the Italian rustics and the classic costume of Attica, and with gazing on Titian, whom he at this time preferred to all painters of these latter days—Barry once more sought amusement in disputes with fellow artists, and in hostile bickerings with wandering virtuosi and pedestrian picture dealers. Burke had long been sensible of this grievous infirmity in his friend's temper, and in a series of eloquent and affectionate letters, endeavoured to soothe down his rugged spirit, and sugar over the bitterness of his nature. It was all in vain. " You have given," thus writes Burke, " a strong, and, I fancy, a very faithful picture of the dealers in taste with you. It is very right that you should know and remark their little arts ; but as fraud will intermeddle in every

transaction of life, where we cannot oppose ourselves to it with effect, it is by no means our duty or our interest to make ourselves uneasy, or multiply enemies on account of it. In particular, you may be assured that the traffic in antiquity, and all the enthusiasm, folly, or fraud, which may be in it, never did, nor ever can, hurt the merit of living artists: quite the contrary, in my opinion; for I have ever observed that whatever it be that turns the minds of men to any thing relative to the arts, brings artists more and more into credit and repute; and though now and then the mere broker and dealer in such things runs away with a great deal of the profit, yet in the end ingenious men will find themselves gainers by the dispositions which are nourished and diffused in the world by such pursuits. I praise exceedingly your resolution of going on well with those whose practices you cannot altogether approve—*there is no living in this world upon any other terms.*”

If Barry ever formed the resolution of living on terms of peace with these men of virtù, his intractable temper soon broke it. He was now, by his own account, become so fastidious in his taste that even Titian could no longer please him—he looked with scorn upon all works below his own air-drawn standard of excellence, and regarded, and addressed, with sarcastic displeasure all “whose gods were not his gods.” It was his misfortune that he uniformly fancied himself the conqueror in these uncivil debates: hence a growing belief that the time must come when there would be a reaction of popular feeling in favour of one who had braved martyrdom in the cause

of honesty in picture dealing. He acknowledged, meantime, the influence of his enemies in that sensitive part, the pocket, and said they had made his profession unprofitable—which he lamented, not on his own account, but for the sake of his benevolent friend, Burke. “It has been a real grief to me,” he writes to his patron, “that I could not contribute to lighten the expenses your good-nature and generosity have led you into for me. I have nothing to say on my own behalf, but that I shall carry myself so, both as a man and an artist, as never to bring a blush on your face on my account.” He imagines, however, that the uncivility of his opponents had done him some service, by confirming him in the resolution of playing a high game in art, and he even attributes to their malice the great progress he is making in his studies. “I saw from the beginning that I was hated—and hated for the very dispositions I relied upon to recommend me. I saw every avenue shut up from me by their power and industry, except the glorious one of my profession, so I went seriously to work and left to them the cavaliers and the wasting away of their time, in dressing up phantoms and distorted macaronies in my name.”

It must be confessed that Barry looked upon life with strange eyes. “Out of the nettle danger he loved to pluck the flower safety.” By living at dagger’s drawing with his brethren, he avoided the expense, he said, of treats and taverns; and to their satiric comments upon his colouring, he owed, he declared, his knowledge of the merits of Titian! Having unconsciously done him these favours, his enemies commenced an attack upon him person-

ally. "This," he says, with a smile, "was more in their power, for though the body and the soul of a picture will discover themselves on the slightest glance, yet you know it could not be the same with such a pock-pitted hard-featured little fellow as I am . . . . so that I shall be surprised if you have not been frightened with the terrible accounts given of me." The answer of Mr. Burke to all this is marked by his uncommon qualities of head and heart—it shows intimate knowledge of the world and its ways, and a perfect appreciation of the failings and excellencies of the singular person to whom it is addressed. The date is London, 16th September, 1769.

"As to reports, my dear Barry, concerning your conduct and behaviour, you may be very sure they would have no kind of influence here; for none of us are of such a make as to trust to any one's report for the character of a person whom we ourselves know. Until very lately I have never heard any thing of your proceedings from others; and when I did, it was much less than I had known from myself—that you had been upon ill terms with the artists and virtuosi of Rome, without much mention of cause or consequence. If you have improved these unfortunate quarrels to your advancement in your art, you have turned a very disagreeable circumstance to a very capital advantage. However you may have succeeded in this uncommon attempt, permit me to suggest to you, with that friendly liberty which you have always had the goodness to bear from me, that you cannot possibly always have the same success, either with regard to your for-

tune or your reputation. Depend upon it that you will find the same competitions, the same jealousies, the same arts and cabals, the emulations of interest and of fame, and the same agitations and passions here that you have experienced in Italy; and if they have the same effect on your temper, they will have just the same effects on your interest; and be your merit what it will, you will never be allowed to paint a picture. It will be the same at London as at Rome, and the same in Paris as in London: for the world is pretty nearly alike in all its parts: nay, though perhaps it would be a little inconvenient to me, I had a thousand times rather you should fix your residence in Rome than here, as I should not then have the mortification of seeing with my own eyes, a genius of the first rank, lost to the world, himself and his friends, as I certainly must, if you do not assume a manner of acting and thinking here totally different from what your letters from Rome have described to me. That you had just subjects of indignation always, and of anger often, I do noways doubt; who can live in the world without some trial of his patience? But believe me, my dear Barry, that the arms with which the ill-dispositions of the world are to be combated, and the qualities by which it is to be reconciled to us, and we reconciled to it, are moderation, gentleness, a little indulgence to others, and a great deal of distrust of ourselves; which are not qualities of a mean spirit, as some may possibly think them, but virtues of a great and noble kind, and such as dignify our nature as much as they contribute to our repose and fortune; for nothing can be so unworthy of a

well-composed soul as to pass away life in bickerings and litigations ; in snarling and scuffling with every one about us. Again and again, my dear Barry, we must be at peace with our species, if not for their sakes, yet very much for our own."

The conclusion of this memorable letter seems dictated by a species of inspiration, which, looking mournfully and prophetically forward, expressed in a few, clear, and eloquent words, the disastrous career of the object of all this solicitude.

" Think what my feelings must be, from my unfeigned regard for you, and from my wishes that your talents might be of use, when I see what the inevitable consequences must be of your persevering in what has hitherto been your course ever since I knew you, and which you will permit me to trace out to you beforehand. You will come here : you will observe what the artists are doing : and you will sometimes speak disapprobation in plain words, and sometimes in no less expressive silence : by degrees you will produce some of your own works. They will be variously criticised : you will defend them : you will abuse those who have attacked you : expostulations, discussions, letters, possibly challenges, will go forward—you will shun your brethren—they will shun you. In the mean time gentlemen will avoid your friendship, for fear of being engaged in your quarrels : you will fall into distress, which will only aggravate your disposition for further quarrels : you will be obliged, for maintenance, to do any thing for any body : your very talents will depart for want of hope and encouragement,

and you will go out of the world fretted, disappointed, and ruined. Nothing but my real regard for you could induce me to set these considerations in this light before you. Remember, we are born to serve and to adorn our country, and not to contend with our fellow citizens—and that, in particular, your business is to paint, and not to dispute."

It really appears that Barry imagined himself all this while one of the meekest beings that ever studied the antique. The fear of some and the hatred of others, he imputed to any cause save his own headlong impetuosity of temper: nay, he actually seems to have supposed that his scornful sallies and sarcastic criticisms would be received with thankfulness, since they sprung from nothing but zeal for the benefit of art. From the first day of his appearance in Rome, he took the station of a judge, and delivered opinions with the intrepidity of one grown gray in study and in fame. All this in a young man of three or four and twenty, who could not as yet appeal to the excellency of his own works as his warrant, was not likely to be received with gratitude, particularly by a proverbially thinskinned and irritable tribe. Yet he never conceived he was to blame, and wrote down art as largely his debtor for candour and boldness. He defied the world, but he defended himself to Burke. "Your friendship is, I think, as visible in the warm picture you have drawn of my contentious disposition, as in any other part of your generous conduct towards me; but then shall I assure you that I am not that censorious inspector and publisher of the defects of other artists? No;

you know me better, notwithstanding what you have said, and I know, whether from my vanity or my virtue, if I have any, you will never meet with an artist more warm and just to the merit of his brethren, or more inclined to overlook their deficiencies than I am."

A charge of a graver nature than infirmity of temper, after having long been whispered about in professional coteries has lately been set forth in Mr. Smith's Life of Nollekens. "Barry, the historical painter," says this writer, "who was extremely intimate with Nollekens at Rome, took the liberty one night, when they were about to leave the English Coffee-house, to exchange hats with him. Barry's hat was edged with lace, and Nollekens' was a very shabby plain one. Upon his returning the hat next morning, he was requested by Nollekens to let him know why he left him his gold-laced hat. 'Why, to tell you the truth, my dear Joey,' answered Barry, 'I fully expected assassination last night, and I was to have been known by my gold-laced hat.' This villainous transaction, which might have proved fatal to Nollekens, I have often heard him relate, and he generally added, 'It's what the Old Bailey people would call a true bill against Jem.' "

Such is Smith's story; and it is well known to many that Nollekens often related it—but nevertheless we must receive it with distrust and suspicion. Barry was fierce, sullen, and sarcastic, but I cannot believe him capable of an atrocity. At all events he was not a fool—and that he should put the life of an innocent man in jeopardy at night to save his own, and in the morning acknowledge

his guilt so gaily to his intended victim, appears incredible. The story must have originated in some practical joke—some betting speculation, perhaps, upon the well-known weakness of Nollekens. No one who knew Barry could believe him guilty of conduct at once so base and so absurd ; and indeed the sculptor appears to have sufficiently refuted the serious interpretation of his own story, by promoting the interests and defending the cause of Barry in the Royal Academy, when all others had forsaken him.

Barry had now remained five years in Rome. He had examined, and studied, and copied those works on which the world had set the seal of approbation. Nor had he laboured for subsistence, for the munificence of Burke and his brothers had placed him above want ; he was requested to draw upon them for such sums as he might require beyond his stated allowance of fifty pounds a year. He had, in short, laid in an ample stock of knowledge ; and was now about to return to England, to carry his acquirements into practice. Something like misgivings from time to time came across his mind ; he had doubts of final success, and even fears, now and then, that he might have, after all mistaken the proper course of study, and bowed to unprofitable gods. “ O, I could be happy,” he very movingly says, “ on my going home, to find some corner where I could sit down in the middle of my studies, books, and casts after the antique, to paint this work and others, where I might have models of nature when necessary, bread and soup, and a coat to cover me ! I

should care not what became of my work when it was done ; but I reflect with horror upon such a fellow as I am, and with such a kind of art, in London, with house rent to pay, duns to follow me, and employers to look for. Had I studied art in a manner more accommodated to the nation, there would be no dread of this."

On the 22d of April, 1770, he left Rome, and proceeded to examine the principal galleries which lay in his way home. His memorandums are numerous, and all marked by his peculiarity of character, and idolatry of the antique. The Venus and Apollo had blinded him to all other excellence. "I am arrived," said he, "at that unlucky pass, that nothing will go down with me but perfection, at least in some one of the grand essentials of a picture. In Turin I saw the Royal Collection of Pictures ; but, except one or two by Guido, which I did not like, all the rest are Flemish and Dutch. Rubens, Rembrandt, Vandyke, Teniers, and Saalken, are without the pales of my church ; and though I will not condemn them, yet I must hold no intercourse with them. God help you, Barry, said I, where is the use of your hair-breadth niceties and your antiques ? Behold the handwriting upon the wall against you. In the country to which you are going, pictures of lemon-peels, oysters, and tricks of colour, are in as much request as they are here." There were moods, nevertheless, in which he felt the difficulty of judging wisely of a work of genius, and he spoke truly when he said, "One painter is a very improper person to give an account of another that

is out of the pale of his school ; they must think of one-another as the Catholics and Calvinists do —all without-doors is damnation."

He reached Milan. He was unnoticed and unknown ; his enemies were far behind ; and he seemed in a fair way of returning to London to tranquillity and peace. But even here controversy fell in his way, and he embraced it. The Medusa's head of Leonardi da Vinci—with its gloomy brow, watery eyes, and looks full of agony—had gained that eminent painter a place in Barry's esteem, and he went to pay a visit to his celebrated Last Supper. His own account of what followed is too characteristic to be omitted, and too dramatic to be abridged.

" When I came into the Refettorio I found a scaffold erected, which on ascending I saw one half of the picture covered by a great cloth : on examining the other part that was uncovered, I found the skin of colour which composed the picture to be all cracked into little squares of about the eighteenth of an inch over, which were for the most part in their edges loosened from the wall and curling up : however, nothing was materially lost. I saw that the picture had been formerly repaired in some few places ; yet as this was not much, and as the other parts were untouched, there was nothing to complain of. The wonderful truth and variety of the expressions, so well described by Vassari and Rubens, and the admirable finesse of finish and relieveo taken notice of by Armineni, were still remaining. Whilst I was examining this part of the picture, two gentlemen came upon the scaffold, and drew aside the

cloth which covered the other half, which, to my great horror and astonishment, was repainted. One of those men was at great pains to show the vast improvements the picture was receiving by this repainting ; but the repainting and the discourse so kindled my indignation, that I was no longer master of myself. ‘ What, Sir,’ said I, ‘ is it possible you do not perceive how this painter—if I can call him painter—has destroyed the picture in every part on which he has laid his stupid hands? Do not you see that this head is distorted and out of drawing, that there is no longer significance or expression in it, that all his colouring is crude and wants accord? Do, sir, open your eyes, and compare it with the other half of the picture, which he has not as yet buried under his cursed colours.’ He answered me, that this was only a dead colour, and the painter was to go over it a second time. ‘ O, confusion !’ said I, ‘ so much the worse. If he has thus lost his way whilst he was immediately going over the lines and colours of Leonardi’s work, what will become of him when he has no longer any guide, and is left blind and abandoned to his own ignorance?’ And turning myself to two friars of the convent, who stood by, ‘ Fathers,’ said I, ‘ this picture and the painter of it have suffered much by the ignorance of your order. It was whitewashed over some years ago ; it has been again hurt in washing off the white ; and now you have got a beast to paint another picture upon it, who knows no more of the matter than you do yourselves. There was no occasion for thus covering it over with new colours : it might easily be secured in those parts

that are loosening from the wall, and it would stand probably as long as your order will.' The friar told me that he did not understand those matters, and that he spoke but very little Italian—that he was Irish, and that it was by order of the Count de Firmian, who was secretary of state, that this picture was repainted. 'Indeed, then, countryman,' said I, 'the world will be very little obliged to Count de Firmian: it were to be wished, and it will be for the honour and interest of your convent if you can prevail upon the Count to spare at least what is remaining of the picture, and take down the scaffold immediately.'

Of his five years' occupation abroad, a very general account must be rendered. Much of his time was consumed in this sort of warfare; a little was given to a very ingenious inquiry into the origin of Gothic architecture, and to the collection of those historical materials which he afterwards used in his refutation of Winkelmann; but many hours, doubtless, were devoted to the proper objects of his professional study. His ardent spirit enabled him to master much in a little while; and he seems to have examined all that was worth examination with care and attention. He observed, however, no method in his studies: his hours of attending the galleries were dictated by chance; and his mode of copying, by means of a delineator, enabled him to store away the works he liked at a cheap rate; his brethren called it mechanical and unartist-like—they might have added that he was stealing rather than acquiring. The hand of a master may trace by a mechanical process—that of a student must work, if it is to work to pur-

pose, by the unaided eye. Barry *outlined* all the fine antique statues in this manner. The only copies in oil which he made were some few which he sent to Burke, and the only original pictures which he painted were the Adam and Eve and the Philoctetes. He was, at this time, as slow and fastidious in his art, as rash and precipitate in his temper.

On his arrival in England, he was warmly welcomed by Burke; and the first picture which he exhibited was not unworthy of one who aspired to revive the faded lustre of historic painting. He measured himself at once with the most lovely of all Grecian productions, and painted Venus rising out of the sea. This picture is allowed, by friends and foes, to be an exquisite one: but he painted it in vain; it excited no lively sympathy—no fresh emotion; the subject had been exhausted by sculptors and painters—by loftier minds and happier hands. It was received with cold approbation. Having shown his skill in the graceful and lovely, he desired next to grapple with what is called the grand style, and painted his Jupiter and Juno—a work better conceived than executed, exhibiting much majesty of outline, and no little deficiency in colour. But what were Jupiter and Juno to the public of 1773? The great artists of Greece and Italy wrought in the spirit of their age and country; they sought at home for subjects of high character, yet familiarly known. But the heathen gods on Barry's canvass appealed to no popular sympathy—to no national belief—to no living superstition: the mob marvelled what they meant, and the learned had little to say.

Some kind and clever friend perceived this public apathy, and endeavoured to supply a stimulus in the Morning Post. He classed the “*Jupiter and Juno*” with the high historical works, and claimed for Barry a large portion of the genius necessary for elevating British art. Of the great artists of Italy he says justly, “Poetry warmed their imagination; history informed them of facts, and philosophy taught them causes; they felt the uses derived from these studies, and knew that a more thorough knowledge only enables a man to think more justly. Possessed of great natural powers, and having thus cultivated them, they did not fearfully hesitate and observe only through the medium of another man’s prejudices, but boldly and independently exerted their own faculties—they made use of their own eyes to see—their own imaginations to conceive with, and were regulated by their own informed judgments—and fixed upon a ground so firm, their works were sublime, just, and original.” But those great painters did one thing and Barry did another. They, like the Greeks before them, set their imaginations to work upon subjects for which there was a market—Religion called Art to her aid, and the most eloquent of Romish divines never illustrated her legends with the spirit and grandeur of this auxiliary. To this view of the subject, Barry obstinately shut his eyes, and fared accordingly. Those who disliked his “*Jupiter and Juno*,” dwelt upon incorrect drawing and defective colouring. In a work appealing more directly to the public feeling, a work of half the talent would have obtained high praise.

The “*Adam and Eve*,” which he painted in Italy

and finished in London, could not be objected to on these grounds. But the subject, simple as it seems, exacts more from art than art can readily bestow. To imagine two beings new created and pure, and fresh from the hand of the Almighty fashioner, requires the “faculty divine” of a Milton; and to embody in lineament and colours this more than mortal vision, would ask the hand of a Raphael. It was the misfortune of Barry to choose subjects of surpassing beauty, where success was the most difficult, and failure sure to be the most injurious.

We may guess how he felt on this somewhat cold reception of works which he had more than insinuated would bring back the antique art of historic painting amongst us. We know what he did—he left Olympus and the bowers of Eden, and painted the “Death of Wolfe in the battle of Quebec.” While he was busy with this picture, the whisper spread that he had seen the error of his ways, and, in short, forsaken classic severity of character, and poetic freedom of costume, for the actual faces and dresses of the day. It was at length finished and exhibited. A combat of naked men astonished the multitude, who knew all the regiments engaged, and the cut of their regiments. It was neither a poetic interpretation of the fight, nor an historical illustration, but a sort of mixture of both, hastily conceived and indifferently executed, and only redeemed from contempt by the sentiment of heroism, which triumphed in the looks of the expiring General. In subjects of a poetic nature, fancy may clothe as she pleases her own progeny; but in historic

productions, the time and the people must be expressed. The soldiers of George II. might as well have been represented fighting those of Louis XV. on elephants' backs, as in the nakedness of the Lapithæ. Barry, who had shortly before been elected an Associate of the Royal Academy, was so much offended with the way in which this picture was hung or talked about by his brethren, that he never sent another work to their exhibition.

Poverty was now a sore enemy to his peace—the munificence of Burke maintained him at Rome; but now the means of life were to be raised by his pencil, and on nothing that his pencil produced had patronage as yet smiled. His parents, with whom his correspondence seems to have been but casual, were not in a condition to render him assistance. Dr. Sleigh, his early friend, was dead. The un-gainliness of his manners, the caustic sharpness of his remarks, and his sudden resentments repelled those who were willing to serve him. He listened to the good counsel of Burke with growing impatience—nor was he long in making even that friend of friends feel the fierceness of his nature.

He had always professed a strong aversion to portrait painting: some ascribed this to envy of Reynolds, others to his own want of skill in that line of art; and Dr. Brocklesby, wishing to break the spell, requested Burke to sit to Barry. Barry agreed; but he had his own peculiar notions of the etiquette to be observed in a painter's studio, and moreover was in a mood approaching to ill humour with Burke for his intimacy with Reynolds. Burke called repeatedly to commence the sittings for his portrait, but pre-engagements were

pleaded, and a day's notice was demanded—more as a matter of form, it would seem, than of necessity. His patience failed him, and he wrote the following letter :—" It has been very unfortunate for me that my time is so regularly occupied that I can never with certainty tell beforehand when I shall be disengaged. I waited on you exactly at half an hour after eleven, and had the pleasure of finding you at home ; but, as usual, so employed as not to permit you to undertake this disagreeable business. I have troubled you with this letter, as I think it necessary to make an excuse for so frequent and importunate intrusion. Much as it might flatter my vanity to be painted by so eminent an artist, I assure you that, knowing I had no title to that honour, it was only in compliance with the desire often repeated of our common friend, that I have been so troublesome."

It is to the honour of Barry that this letter touched him deeply. He disliked, indeed, its air of distant courtesy and its ironical tone, but Burke had been kind when friends were few and much needed, and he was unwilling to lose him, as well he might. " What am I to understand from all this," was his answer, " surely there must be something in your mind, what is it ? I should be glad to know in its full extent, and permit me to say that I ought not to be left in ignorance of any matter that is likely to make a breach between us. As to Dr. Brocklesby's picture, it is a miserable subject to be made the ground of a quarrel with me. I will paint it, as I always was earnestly inclined to do, when I can get a sitting upon the terms that are granted to all other painters. I

only begged the notice of a day beforehand, and you well know that much more is required by others, and from the very nature of the thing it must be evident that business cannot be carried on without it."

The reader may be curious to learn how such controversies are carried on between a touchy artist and a fastidious sitter. Burke again wrote to assure Barry that he had no wish to offend him, nor was it from any vanity that he desired to be painted, but merely to oblige Dr. Brocklesby. He had sat for his portrait five times—twice in little, and three times in large, and had always gone to the easel without giving previous notice. "A picture of me," he observed, "is now painting for Mr. Thrale, by Sir Joshua Reynolds, and in this manner, and in this only. I will not presume to say that the condescension of some men forms a rule for others. I know that extraordinary civility cannot be claimed as a matter of strict justice. In that view, possibly, you may be right. It is not for me to dispute with you. I have ever looked up with reverence to merit of all kinds, and have learned to yield submission even to the caprices of men of parts. I shall certainly obey your commands, and send you regular notice whenever I am able."

This idle and uncalled-for debate terminated creditably for both—in reconciliation and renewal of friendship. Barry was ashamed of his obstinacy, and Burke relented towards one whom the world was not using according to his merits. The portrait, which caused the "*angry parlé*," was finished soon afterwards, and was considered a

good likeness, and a skilful work. In this lucrative line of art, he might, no doubt, have obtained distinction, if he could have surmounted his reluctance to commence limner of the population at large. But the poetic feeling of Barry refused all sympathy with sordid looks and vulgar costume, and he was content to starve in the service of that Muse, who,

“With rapt soul sitting in her eyes,”

desired him to be daring, and to think only of lofty themes.

His next cabinet pictures—Mercury inventing the Lyre, and Narcissus admiring himself in the Water—were much admired among the imaginative. The latter owed its existence to a conversation with his illustrious friend, during the sittings of his portrait. “On what works of fancy are you employed now?” said Burke. “On this little slight thing,” said Barry, holding up the picture, “it is young Mercury inventing the Lyre. The god, you know, found a tortoise shell at break of day on the sea-shore, and fashioned it into a fine instrument of music.” “I know the story,” replied Burke, “such were the fruits of early rising—he is an industrious deity, and an example to man. I will give you a companion to it. Narcissus wasting time looking at himself in the fountain—an image of idleness and vanity.” The Narcissus was painted, thrown aside, and lost—the Mercury is a sweet and classic production—perhaps one of the happiest of the painter’s works. The god stands on the sea-shore, with the shell of a tortoise in his hand, listening to the sound which

one of its extended fibres has emitted to the touch of his finger. The future instrument dawns upon his mind—and Cupid, inspired with the same thought, presents him with an additional string, which he has plucked from his bow.

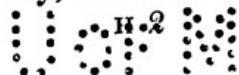
The thoughts of Barry dwelt ever on magnificent undertakings, and he imagined that grandeur and sublimity resided only in scenes of vast extent. He believed too that the Reformed as well as the Romish Church required the aid of art to illustrate its tenets, and animate its devotees—a dream in which the painters of the British school have persisted for a century. He heard, therefore, with undissembled joy, of the proposal to embellish the cathedral of Saint Paul, with paintings of a scriptural nature, corresponding in dimensions with its dome and its panels, and he hastened to offer his services, with the hope of seeing the splendour of the Sistine rivalled in London. He thus writes concerning it to the Duke of Richmond. “The Dean and Chapter have agreed to leave the ornamenting of St. Paul’s to the Academy, and it now rests with us to give permission to such painters as we shall think qualified to execute historical pictures of a certain size, I believe from fifteen to twenty feet high. We also intend to set up a monument there—Pope is mentioned—the sculptor is to be paid by subscription, and a benefit from the playhouse. I proposed this matter to the academy about a year since, a little after my being admitted an associate, and I had long set my heart upon it, as the only means for establishing a solid manly taste for real art, in place of our contemptible passion for the daubing of inconse-

quential things, portraits of dogs, landscapes, &c.—things which, the mind, which is the soul of art, having no concern in them, have hitherto served to disgrace us over all Europe." It is in his own house that the Englishman has set up the images which he loves to worship. The annual multitudes of paintings, all of a social and domestic character, which the Academy exhibits, are to be viewed with respect, since they bear witness to the general cultivation of home-bred happiness; but Barry regarded all such compositions as no better than unblushing indications of insular stupidity. He resolved to lend no countenance to this domestic heresy in art, and determined to endure every privation in the exaltation of his profession. "I have taken great pains," he said, "to fashion myself for this kind of Quixotism: to this end I have contracted and simplified my cravings and wants, and brought them into a very narrow compass." There is no doubt but he would have enjoyed all the luxury of privation, had he painted a few twenty-feet square pictures for the cathedral of St. Paul's, since they were to be done at the proper cost, not of the church, but of the Academicians. The subject which Barry selected, was the Jews rejecting Christ when Pilate intreated his release—he probably made no progress in the sketch, and allowed the picture to lie embodied in his imagination till the sanction of the hierarchy should let his pencil loose.

The obstinacy of the Bishop of London, to which we have already alluded, made all this enthusiasm vain; and great and stormy was Barry's indignation.

While the project concerning St. Paul's was yet in suspense, he found time to execute his Chiron and Achilles, a work of classical beauty and simplicity — which was purchased by Mr. Palmer at the singular rate of twenty guineas *per figure*. This mechanical mode of calculation seems to have been the artist's own invention, for in a letter to the Duke of Richmond, concerning a picture which his grace had commissioned, there occurs the following characteristic passage. " My finances are pretty low at present, therefore, if your grace should think proper to send me any part of the price of the picture, it would come very opportunely. I count upon six figures in it, and I had twenty guineas a figure for the picture I sold to Mr. Palmer, of Chiron and Achilles." The answer of the nobleman is in keeping with Barry's letter. " If I recollect right," said his grace, " the picture of Stratonice has but four capital figures in it, the other two being only companions ; however, I do not mean to value the picture by the number of figures. On the other side of this paper I send you a draft on my banker for a hundred guineas, which I should hope you will think a sufficient price for the picture ; but if you do not, I will immediately send you another draft for twenty more." How this controversy concluded, I can find no account—probably unfavourably for the pocket of the painter.

When the Bishop of London at length rejected the offer of the Royal Academy, it occurred to the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce, that they might avail themselves of this spirit of liberality, and have their



rooms at the Adelphi covered by the surplus talent of the land, free of all expense. The passions of the painters, like those of the poet, seemed raging like so many devils to get vent in historic composition, and Valentine Green, the Secretary of the Society, was authorized to open the doors of the great rooms of the Adelphi for their accommodation : but ere this happened the Academy had taken another view of the matter, and they refused the offer. Barry, whose hopes had been raised high, was deeply grieved at this second disappointment ; he imagined that he saw in it the extinction of all his dreams, and that the grand historic style had bowed its supremacy for ever before that domestic idol, portraiture. Having failed in painting the nation into a love of the historic art, he resolved to make a last effort, and, if possible, write them into it : — and hence his “ Inquiry into the Real and Imaginary Obstructions to the Progress of Art in England.”

A work of this sort had been long in his fancy. It was suggested while he was at Rome by the ignorant taunts of foreigners, that the genius of the British isles was too cold for works of fine imagination. Talent had been set down in the strange theories of Montesquieu and Winkelmann as the product of latitude, and the ardent fancy and delicacy of feeling which went to the composition of noble works, were compared to vines, which, producing rich large and luscious clusters in the sunny vales of France and Italy, yield only small, sour, and starveling bunches in the cold moist climate of England. The Inquiry of Barry had a twofold purpose : the refutation of these

M. M. O. L.

visionaries, and a vindication of his own theory, that art, before it could be honourable to England, required to devote itself fully to historic composition.

His answer to Winkelmann was triumphant, if the victory which common-sense obtains over absurdity can be called a triumph. He refused all help from scientific reasoning, and proved, by the evidence of history, that whatever influence the sun might have on the fruits of the earth, the rise, the glory, and degradation of nations had come from moral causes, in which neither climate nor season had any share. In Greece the warmth of the sun was ever the same, and the recurrence of the seasons also; corn, wine, and oil, all excellent in their kinds, had been produced during all periods, and are now produced, yet the fine arts are extinguished, and national capacity gone. If Greece had her day of glory, the same had happened to modern Italy—her long line of illustrious artists had come to an end; yet the land yielded as richly as ever its annual crop of fruit. Having crushed the principle on which this exclusive system of genius is founded, he handled with indignant vigour the insulting inference that the capacity of England was unequal to high art. He claimed superiority for the British in works of mental grandeur and loftiness of imagination, and pointed out Spenser, and Shakespeare, and Milton, as abounding in the finest pictures, and in the noblest and loveliest images of beauty.

Of a work, which may be considered as the first literary production of the Royal Academy, the offspring of a mind full of knowledge, and ani-

mated by more than common enthusiasm, it may be proper to transcribe some specimens. "It is a misfortune, (says Barry,) never entirely to be retrieved, that painting was not suffered to grow up amongst us at the same time with poetry and the other arts and sciences, whilst the genius of the nation was yet forming its character in strength, beauty, and refinement: it would have received a strength and a polish, and it would, in its turn, have given to our poetry a greater perfection in one of its master-features, in which, Milton and Spenser excepted, it is rather somewhat defective. But the nation is now formed, and perhaps more than formed, and there is cause to fear that it may be too late to expect the last degree of perfection in the arts, from what we are now likely to produce in an age when, perhaps, frothy affectations, and modish, corrupt, silly opinions of foreign as well as of domestic growth, have but too generally taken place of that masculine vigour and purity of taste so necessary both for the artist and for his employer. Let us suppose ever so many fortunate circumstances to concur in leading an artist into such a tract of study, among old stones and old canvas, as that he may be able to assimilate the pure, rigid, beautiful, simple taste of the Greeks and the old Italians with his own substance and observations on nature; yet afterwards, if he should unfortunately happen to find that the era of those qualities has either not arrived, or is long since passed away, amongst the people who are, generally speaking, to be his employers, and that they have but little of that grandeur of idea and elevation of mind which will encourage him in the

pursuit of extraordinary things, what is he to do ? His great advantages over meaner artists will infallibly lie by, mouldering away through disease, and he must content himself with a contest of little value, mere matters of execution."

He laments, like a greater man, that he has come an hour too late, and fallen on evil and ignorant times, when common transcripts of nature and fine colours were triumphing over historic art ; and he imputes the discouragement of native works of genius to the admiration of all that is of foreign growth—to the ignorant enthusiasm of the rich, who, while pouring out their money and their praise on the rubbish and offal of the easel, devoutly believed they were buying and worshipping Raphael, Titian, and Correggio. His words are strong, and near the truth. " Artful men, both at home and abroad, have not failed to avail themselves of this passion for ancient art, as it afforded a fine coverlet for imposition—for vending in the names of those great masters, the old copies, imitations, and studies of all the obscure artists that have been working in Italy, Flanders, and other places for two hundred years past. These things are to be had in great plenty, and may be, as I have often known at Rome, baptized ' first thoughts,' ' second thoughts, with alterations,' ' duplicates,' and what not. It would be endless to give an account of all the various ways in which our antiquaries and picture-dealers, both at home and abroad, carry on the business of imposition. The Pope and the States of Venice, and other Italian communities, have set their seals upon all pictures worth keeping, and not one can be moved by means of either

persuasion or bribery. This ill-fated country of ours is therefore crammed with nothing but rubbish from abroad, and our artists at home must necessarily, to avoid risking the displeasure of their patrons, favour this mockery and cheat put upon them. The absurd abuse of our love of art is the disgrace of our country and age; it has long lain like a dead weight upon the loins of national improvement."

The audacious honesty of this eminent man conspired against his success in art: he talked and wrote down the impressions of his pencil. Having satirized the great dry-nurses of British art, whose cold and ungenial bosoms froze infant excellence to death, he thus handles the living painters themselves. "There are, to be sure, but few artists whose personal interests happen to be embarked in the same bottom with the dignity of the art, and consequently with the interests of the public; but there are a few; and as for the many, who have no part in this exertion of superior art, they ought in conscience to content themselves with the greater profits which in this commercial country must ever follow the practice of the lower branches, especially as they cannot expect to keep up for ever the false weight and importance which they have assumed in consequence of those greater gettings. It is therefore to be hoped that they will no longer find it practicable to play the part of the dog in the manger as they have hitherto done; for indeed a great many of the blocks and impediments thrown in the way of superior art, have been owing to the secret workings and machinations of those interested men."

All this added new enemies to the old ; nor am I sure that Barry's limited theory of excellence in art is at all just. Scenes of historic or religious grandeur ought no more to retain the exclusive monopoly of the pencil, than of the pen. The poetry of the nation has given an echo to every cord of feeling. The love of woman, and the courage of man, look hardly less beautiful in the minstrel's humble song, than in the loftiest epic. We grow satiated with the clangor of the trumpet, and long for the breathing of the lute ; and were the whole earth planted with roses of Sharon and lillies of the valley, such is the desire of human nature for variety that we would grow weary of walking amidst perfume, and sigh for the thistle and the daisy, the harebell and the heather. The monotony which the artist recommends, though a monotony of excellence, would tire us at last. We would long for humbler things—for scenes in which all could sympathize—for fireside looks and familiar faces.

Having disposed of all inferior painters, cunning connoisseurs and tricky antiquarians, he turned to the religion of the land, with some bitterness. "Where religion," says he, "is affirmative and extended, it gives a loose and an enthusiasm to man's fancy, which throws a spirit into the air and manners, and stamps a diversity, life-quickness, sensibility, and expressive significance, over every thing they do. In another place, religion is more negative and contented : being formed in direct opposition to the first, its measures are regulated accordingly : much pains are taken to root out and remove every thing that gives wing to

the imagination, and so to regulate the outward man by a torpid inanimate composure, gravity and indifference, that it may attend to nothing but the mere acts of necessity, every thing else being reputed idle and vain. Men so formed had as few words as buttons ; the tongue spoke almost without moving the lips ; and the circumstances of a murder were related with as little emotion as an ordinary mercantile transaction. Some kinds of religion appear to be the graves of art, of genius, of sensibility, and of all the finer and more spiritual parts of the human faculties : other religions have been the nurse and the mother of them ; they have embraced all the arts : poetry, painting, music, architecture, and every effort of ingenuity were employed in giving a force and a furtherance to their views."

Barry looked upon the Pope as a President, and upon the Romish church as the Queen of Academies. To an ardent proselyte of the Catholic system, painting appeared a lawful auxiliary ; and as an artist he was willing to believe it a most efficient one : but he spoke like a painter, though he spoke with much knowledge, for he had considered every subject which art either aids or adorns.

Dissertations on the fine arts were uncommon ; popular affection had not been so fully awakened as to enable the multitude to understand and feel the importance of this memorable work. It had the repulsive aspect of a controversial treatise ; and was coldly received by all, save a coterie of artists and antiquarians, who were stung by its satiric energy. I am afraid I must impute to this

production, in some degree at least, the ultimate estrangement of his best and greatest friend. It was no longer "My dear Barry" and your "faithful friend, Edmund Burke:" correspondence was carried on through the frosty medium of the third person, and there was now no overflowing warmth either of affection or advice. A sort of diplomatic civility took the place of kindness; and Barry had to learn the melancholy task of addressing an old and tried friend in the language of mere acquaintance. To continue on intimate terms with one so fierce of nature, it was necessary to become his partizan: he expected those who loved him should share his griefs, and resent whatever he thought worthy of resentment. To become Barry's friend, was like being a second in a duel of old, when both principals and seconds drew their swords and fought the quarrel out. Into disputes with a rich and influential body of men, Burke was likely to be slow in precipitating himself: he felt that his friend Reynolds was a sufferer from the pen and tongue of Barry, and he was glad to retire to such a distance as gave him the power to remain neuter in these unhappy contests. Inter-course, both personally and by letter, continued between them: it never more resumed the affectionate cordiality of earlier years.

A gradual change had taken place both in the person and the temper of Barry. He neglected his dress, lived sullenly and alone, and held inter-course with few of those men who influence the fame and fortune of artists. He seemed ever in a reverie, out of which he was unwilling to be roused. The history of his life is the tale of

splendid works contemplated and seldom begun—of theories of art, exhibiting the confidence of genius and learning—and of a constant warfare, waged against a coterie of connoisseurs, artists and antiquarians, who ruled the realm of taste. The high distinction which he claimed, as follower of the grand style, rendered it necessary, he imagined, that he should vindicate his title. To think and to act were matters of the same moment with one so enthusiastic. He determined to offer his pencil to the Society of Arts; and applied for permission to adorn their great room with a series of historical paintings, all from his own hand, and wholly at his own expense. When he made this magnificent offer, he had but sixteen shillings in his pocket, and was aware that, if it were accepted, he must have to steal time from sleep to supply him with the means of life. He was willing to lie hard, live mean, and dress coarsely, with the hope of being heard of hereafter: he was truly one of those ardent spirits who hunger and thirst after distinction, and whom the narrow and the sordid reproach, as idle dreamers and fantastic enthusiasts. “I thought myself bound (he says) in duty to the country, to art, and to my own character, to try whether my abilities would enable me to exhibit the proof as well as the argument.” The Society gave prompt permission: he stipulated for nothing but the free exercise of his own judgment, free admission at all times to his undertaking, and that the necessary models should be provided for him without expense.

He had now “ample room and verge enough” to exhaust his powers of imagination, and exhibit

all his knowledge and skill. The subject which he selected for illustration was Human Improvement —presenting a succession of varied pictures of society. He divided the whole into six compartments. “ We begin,” said the artist, describing his own conceptions, “ with man in a savage state, full of inconvenience, imperfection and misery, and we follow him through several gradations of culture and happiness, which, after our probationary state here, are finally attended with beatitude or misery. The first is the story of Orpheus; the second, a Harvest-home or Thanksgiving to Ceres and Bacchus: the third the Victors at Olympia; the fourth, Navigation, or the Triumph of the Thames; the fifth, the Distribution of Premiums in the Society of Arts; and the sixth, Elysium, or the State of final Retribution. Three of these subjects are poetical; the others historical.” He commenced these works in 1777, and finished them in 1783. A short description may not be unacceptable.

The first picture represents Orpheus as the founder of Grecian civilization, uniting in one character the legislator, divine, philosopher, poet, and musician. He stands in a wild and savage country, surrounded by people as uncultivated as their soil, to whom, as messenger of the gods, he is pouring out his song of instruction, accompanied by the music of the lyre. The hearers of this celestial delegate are armed with clubs, and clad in the skins of wild beasts; they have courage and strength, by which they subdue lions and tigers: but they want wisdom for their own protection and for that of their offspring. In illustration of

this, a matron is seen, at a little distance from the door of her hut, milking a goat, while her children are about to become the prey of a lion; two horses are run down by a tiger; and a damsels, carrying a dead fawn, leans on the shoulder of her male companion. "I wished to glance," said the painter, "at a matter often observed by travellers, which is, that the value and estimation of women increase according to the growth and cultivation of society, and that amongst savage nations they are in a condition little better than the beasts of burden." In the distance, Ceres descends on the world; and by the side of Orpheus lie paper, an egg, a bound lamb, and materials for sacrifice.

The second piece exhibits a dance of youths and maidens round the terminal figure of Pan. On one side appears the father of the harvest feast, with a white staff or rustic sceptre in his hand, accompanied by his wife; on the other is a group of peasants, carousing amid rakes and ploughs, and fruits and flowers; while behind the whole, two oxen are seen drawing a load of corn to the threshing-floor. Ceres, Bacchus and Pan overlook from the clouds this scene of innocent festivity. A farm-house, with all its in-door and out-door economy is there. Love, too, and marriage mingle in the scene: children abound; rustic games are not forgotten; and aged men repose on the ground, applauding sports in which they can no longer participate.

The third picture, the crowning of the victors in the Olympian games, shows the judges seated on a throne, bearing the likenesses of Solon, Lycurgus, and other legislators, and trophies of

Salamis, Marathon, and Thermopylæ. Before them pass the victors crowned; people are crowding to look on them. The heroes, poets, sages, and philosophers of Greece are present. Pindar leads the chorus: Hiero, of Syracuse, follows in his chariot: Diagoras, the Rhodian, is borne round the stadium on the shoulders of his victorious sons: Pericles is seen speaking to Cimon; while Socrates, Anaxagoras and Euripides listen, and Aristophanes laughs and scoffs.

The fourth piece descends to modern times, and the scene is laid at home. The Thames triumphs in the presence of Drake, Raleigh, Cabot, and Cooke. Mercury, as Commerce, accompanies them; and Nereïds are carrying articles of manufacture and industry. Some of these demi-celestial porters are more sportive than laborious, and others still more wanton than sportive. As music is connected closely with all matters of joy and triumph, Burney, the composer, accompanies Drake and Raleigh, and cheers them with his instrument.

The fifth picture is a meeting of the members of the Society of Arts, discoursing on the manufactures, commerce and liberal pursuits of the country, and distributing the annual premiums. It is an assemblage of the chief promoters of the institution, male and female, with the gratuitous addition of Johnson and Burke.

The sixth picture is a view of Elysium. Mental Culture conducts to Piety and Virtue, and Piety and Virtue are rewarded by Immortal Happiness. In a picture forty-two feet long, the artist had room for the admission of many of the great and the good of all nations. Greece and Rome, France,

Italy, and England, supplied him largely; and he has endeavoured to bring together the chief of their distinguished sons in one connected group, over which a splendour is shed from between the wings of angels.

Those who have examined these extraordinary works will hardly dispute that the artist grappled with a subject too varied, complicated and profound for the pencil. The moral grandeur of the undertaking, and the historical associations which it awakened, together with the room which it afforded for the display of imagination, imposed upon the ardent and indiscriminating Barry, and he probably began

With desperate charcoal round the darken'd walls  
of the Adelphi,—in the belief that the subject would unfold and brighten upon him by degrees. But the sunrise of knowledge, and the full day of art and science, involved discoveries and inventions which painting could not well find shape nor colour to express. The fault of the work lies in the subject: he that runs cannot read, and he who reads cannot always understand. The description, by Barry's own pen, opens the secret somewhat: without it these six pictures, instead of presenting one continual story—simple in conception and unembarrassed in detail—would appear like so many splendid riddles. The *grand style* (which our artist thought to revive) is the simplest of all, and can be comprehended without comment.

That Jonas Hanway left a guinea instead of a shilling, for his admission to see the Adelphi pictures—that Johnson beheld “a grasp of mind in

them which he could find no where else"—and that Townley declared they were "composed upon the true principles of the best paintings," are sayings and doings sufficiently notorious, and which have had and will have their weight with the world. Nay, Lord Aldborough wrote to the artist such praise as I am half afraid to transcribe. "When I return to town, I shall again and again visit these unequalled performances; they will stand the comparison of the past and the test of future ages, for originality of design, instruction, colouring, energy and disposition of figure, and judgment and success in the invention and execution. You have taken in all the perfections, combined all the qualities of Raphael, Titian, Guido, and the most celebrated artists of the Grecian and Roman schools; and your literary works prove that you possess all the liberal arts as well as painting; and reflect equal honour on the age we live in, as shame on this country for the want of due encouragement. My house and fortune are at your service till your fortune equal your abilities." I know not what answer was returned to this splendid offer.

On those six pictures Barry spent six years—instead of three, which he had originally contemplated—a miscalculation that involved him in many difficulties, out of which he strove to extricate himself by uncommon frugality, self-denial, and labour during the periods he should have reserved for repose. He gave his day to the Adelphi, and much of his night to hurried drawings and hasty engravings, by the profits of which he sustained life. "He has recorded some of his prints,"

says Dr. Fryer. “as done at this time—such as his Job, Birth of Venus, head of Lord Chatham, King Lear. Many lighter things, were done at the pressure of the moment, and never owned.” During the progress of the work he began to perceive, and perhaps to feel, the approaches of want ; and to keep this adversary of genius at bay, he applied to Sir George Savile—a leading member of the Society of Arts—to communicate his situation to his brethren, and by a small subscription enable him to exist till he had finished the undertaking. The appeal was in vain. Nay, he experienced some difficulty in obtaining that allowance for models and colours for which he had expressly stipulated, and was subjected to the official insolence of the acting secretary. The Society afterwards reflected, that it would be injurious to allow a man to starve whom they might have to bury, and they accordingly kept his soul and body together—first, by two donations of fifty guineas each, and the gift of a gold medal, and, lastly, two hundred guineas at the conclusion of the work.

That Barry was very proud of his performance may be easily believed. “It will be exceedingly hard,” he says, in his celebrated letter to the Dilettanti Society, “if the benefit of the laws should be withheld from the painter of such a work as that on Human Culture; which, for public interest and ethical utility of subject—for the castigated purity of Grecian design—for beauty, grace, vigorous effect and execution—stands so successfully in the view and neighbourhood of the so justly celebrated Orleans collection.” There were many to smile at the absurdities of some parts of the Six

Pictures, who could not feel the depth of mind which sought to unite them into one harmonious whole. To see the River Thames carried by Tritons, and Dr. Burney in the costume of the year 1778 playing a tune to Drake and Raleigh, excited laughter. "I am by no means pleased," said a Dowager, putting her fan before her face, "to see good Dr. Burney with a parcel of naked girls dabbling in a horse pond." A young lady from the north, of great beauty and wit, went to take a look at the painter's Elysium. She looked earnestly for a while, and said to Mr. Barry, "The ladies have not yet arrived in this Paradise of yours." "O, but they have, madam," said the painter, with a smile; "they reached Elysium some time ago; but I could find no place so fit for creatures so bright and beautiful as behind yon very luminous cloud—they are there, and very happy, I assure you."

As a relief from the toil of this extensive work, he took up his pen, and in a long and able description and dissertation maintained the excellence both of the subject he had chosen, and the way in which he had handled it. This performance, amidst all its knowledge and eloquence, has a strong infusion of bitter feeling; the allusions to those who grow rich and important in pursuing the more sordid branches of art, are frequent and sharp. "Mr. Barry's exhibition," writes Dr. Johnson, "was opened the same day, and a book was published to recommend it, which, if you read, you will find decorated with some satirical strictures of Sir Joshua Reynolds and others. I have not escaped. You must think with some

esteem of Barry for the comprehension of his design." These sarcasms of Barry produced a letter bearing in every line the mental impress of Edmund Burke; it was universally ascribed to his pen, though to this moment unacknowledged. The imagination, the vigour of thought, the varied knowledge and skill of hand which the six pictures display, are at the outset admitted; and then the critic quits the canvas to fall sharply upon the dissertation. Barry had spoken with levity or irreverence of the art of portrait-painting; he had drawn a distinction between the poetic and the merely imitative, which separated them as far as the south is from the north. Burke urges the propriety of uniting both in historic composition, thus:

"Without the power of combining and abstracting, the most accurate knowledge of forms and colours will produce only uninteresting trifles; but without any accurate knowledge of forms and colours, the most happy power of combining and abstracting will be absolutely useless; for there is no faculty of the mind which can bring its energy into effect, unless the memory be stored with ideas for it to work upon. These ideas are the materials of invention, which is only a power of combining and abstracting, and which, without such materials, would be in the same state as a painter without canvas, boards, and colours. Experience is the only means of acquiring ideas of any kind, and continued observation and study upon one class of objects the only way of rendering them accurate. The painter who wishes to make his picture what fine pictures must be—nature ele-

vated and improved—must first of all gain a perfect knowledge of nature as it is. Before he endeavours, like Lysippus, to make men as they ought to be, he must know how to render them as they are ; he must acquire an accurate knowledge of all parts of their body and countenance. To know anatomy will be of little use, unless physiology and physiognomy are joined with it, so that the artist may know what peculiar combinations and proportions of feature constitute different characters, and what effect the passions and affections of the mind have upon those features. This is a science which all the theorists in the world cannot teach, and which can only be acquired by observation, practice, and attention. It is not by copying antique statues, or by giving a loose to the imagination in what are called poetical compositions, that artists will be enabled to produce works of real merit, but by a laborious and accurate investigation of nature upon the principles observed by the Greeks—first, to make themselves thoroughly acquainted with the common forms of nature, and then, by selecting and combining, to form compositions according to their own elevated conceptions. This is the principle of true poetry, as well as of painting and sculpture.”

The ease and elegance with which these important truths are expressed will be felt by many who are not perhaps aware that it was the theory, as it was the practice of Barry, to extract all that is noble in art from all that is elevated in nature. The shafts of his satire were directed against the regular manufacturers of portraits : but he nowhere insinuates that imagination may fly its own free

flight, or that poetic art is anything else than purified nature. He endeavours to distinguish between painters who can counterfeit only such faces as live before them, and those of the higher order, described so well by Sir Philip Sydney, “ who, having no law but wit, bestow that in colours upon you which is fittest for the eye to see—as the constant, though lamenting look of Lucretia, when she punished in herself another’s fault; wherein he painteth not Lucretia—whom he never saw—but painteth the outward beauty of such a virtue.” It was the fashion of the day to claim the honours of historical art for portraiture, and Burke’s letter could not be unacceptable to Reynolds, whose practice the Dissertation of Barry was obviously designed to impeach.

Penny, professor of painting, dying in 1782, Barry was elected in his place; and as this elevation happened during the intensest period of his labour upon the Six Pictures, he was unable for nearly two years to prepare a proper course of Lectures—the man who had to work ten hours a-day for fame, and four hours for bread, was not likely to have much time to spare for works of advice or instruction. Reynolds, as President, made some allusion to this unseemly delay on the part of the new Professor: he was answered with great asperity by the imprudent Barry. “ If I had no more to do in the course of my Lectures than produce such poor mistaken stuff as your Discourses, I should soon have them ready for reading.” It is reported that these intemperate words were uttered with his fist clenched, and in a posture of menace.

At length, on the second day of March, 1784, he delivered his first Lecture on painting. Much was looked for from his knowledge and talents; and the audience was very numerous and very attentive. Barry's manner was eager, his utterance impressive; and, on the whole, expectation was not disappointed.

Of these Lectures he delivered six—they embrace all that is included in the word Art, and discuss with abundance of boldness the threefold mystery of conception, composition, and colour. They are the echo of his letters and of his conversation, their one great object being to impress on the minds of the students the utter vanity of all art below the historical. As literary compositions they exhibit neither strict propriety of expression, nor perfect developement of thought; but these defects are far more than atoned for by an earnest feeling for whatever is noble in art, and that readiness of illustration, which can only arise from extensive and matured knowledge, and rapid apprehension. They are, throughout, deformed by sarcastic allusions to modern works and living artists. Barry was a man of severe deportment, who seldom smiled, and conceived a jest beneath the dignity of human nature; his sarcastic remarks therefore were expressed and uttered with a deep and cutting air of solemnity—"he placed his life," as the poet says, "in the wound." The turbulent, uneasy, fierce temper of the man was ever and anon breaking out—nor is it possible to deny that envy was occasionally the inspiration of his periods. His Lectures spared few of his more successful brethren, and could not, therefore, be expected to

pass over the President himself, who was observed, it is said, to avoid the pelting of the storm of invective, by moving the trumpet from his ear, and even seek refuge in a real or pretended nap. Of those ungracious allusions Reynolds often complained—and sarcastically excused his frequent nodding by saying, that he fell asleep *only* at the personalities. Nor did Barry himself in after-life look back upon them with pleasure. “Sir Joshua, to say the truth,” he observed—but this was when Sir Joshua was no more,—“acted somewhat weakly with respect to me; and, on the other side, I was much to blame with respect to him: my notions of candour and liberality between artists who were friends were too juvenile and romantic for human frailty in the general occurrences of life. Disappointed in not finding more in Sir Joshua, I was not then in a humour to make a just estimate of the many shining qualities I might have really found in him.”

Critics were not wanting who found personalities in his paintings as well as in his Lectures. In the emaciated limb which belongs to the *garter* of one whom he precipitates into Tartarus in the Adelphi Paintings, some one detected the noticeable leg of a nobleman who had given grievous offence to the artist. He defended himself with warmth. “What I particularly valued in my work,” he said, “was a dignity, seriousness, and gravity infinitely removed from all personality.” As he had admitted his friends freely to the joys of Elysium, it continued to be supposed that he was very capable of pushing his enemies as unceremoniously into Tartarus.

Barry thought so well of the Adelphi Series, that he resolved to engrave them, and accordingly began to etch them on copper with his own hand. But he was unequal to an undertaking which required nice delicacy of finish ; and his subscribers were astonished when the rough offspring of his graver were put into their hands. They had expected something, probably, superior to the works of mere engravers, and one of them expressed surprise at the coarseness of the workmanship. "Pray, sir," said Barry, "can you tell me what you did expect?" "More finished engravings, sir," was the answer. Nollekens recommended them to his patrons, and these were not few—but Barry was not always disposed to be thankful for acts of kindness. The sculptor, a blunt straightforward man without any sense of delicacy, offended the painter's pride by calling out in the presence of others, "Well, Jem, I have been very successful for you this week—I have got you three more subscribers for your prints." Barry bade him, with an oath, mind his own affairs—if the nobility wanted his engravings they knew where he was to be found. The Six Engravings were finished in 1792—all the impressions were taken with his own hand from a press erected on purpose.

The Society of Arts had indulged him with two exhibitions of his paintings, which yielded in clear profit five hundred pounds ; to this sum he added two hundred pounds more, the produce of his engravings ; and to astonish his friends, make his enemies stare, and show that his good sense had survived every vicissitude of fortune and controversy, he placed the money in the funds, and se-

cured to himself an income of sixty pounds a-year. It ought not to be omitted that Lord Romney gave him one hundred guineas for a portrait copied into one of the Six Pictures—that Timothy Hollis left one hundred pounds to “the Painter of the work upon Human Culture in the Adelphi”—and that Lord Radnor presented him with fifty pounds, made payable in a cheque to the bearer, out of respect to the sensitive feelings of the artist. He always, too, remembered the kindness of the Prince of Wales, who honoured him with several sittings, and spoke to him with a courtesy to which he had not been much accustomed.

Those works secured him fame, and bread at least, if not entire independence—but the professorship of painting, a place of dignity, and which none could fill more worthily, became to him a source of sorrow and misfortune. Historical painting was the divinity he professed to worship, but controversy was the false saint at whose shrine he offered up repose of mind, social happiness, and the best friendships he had formed. The period of his professorship was one of continual bickering and personal dispute. Whatever he imagined could be useful to the Academy he proposed without scruple—whatever he proposed, he urged with vehemence—contradiction he regarded as insult, and repaid with invective—nor did the heat excited in the council-room cool out of doors; like the anxious wife in the Poet’s Tale, Barry “nursed his wrath to keep it warm”—and at the next meeting took his seat only to resume his vituperation. Unwearied sarcasm and ever hot invective will exhaust mortal patience in the upshot; reverence

for genius and respect for honesty of purpose will subside when they cannot be enjoyed in peace; and the man who regularly invades our repose, we will rejoice to get rid of at last, though in genius he approached the gods. Barry's great object was to appropriate the receipts of the Academy exhibitions to the formation of a gallery of the Old Masters; Reynolds was anxious to devote them to the purchase of his *own* fine collection of foreign paintings for the use of the students—propositions which might have been reconciled—but which alarmed those who desired to employ the money in defraying the studies of young artists in Italy, and displeased others who watched over the increasing revenue with the vigilance of dragons, from the mere sordid wish of seeing it accumulate. From the love of gain, of art, or of contradiction, the members obliged neither, and disobliged both. Of these remarkable men, the Academy renounced one, and the other renounced the Academy—yet they most cordially disliked each other. “If there be a man on earth,” said the President to Bacon, the sculptor, “whom I seriously dislike, it is that Barry.”

Those whom the fame of his works, and the rumours of his open warfare with a man of such note as Reynolds, attracted to his study, were struck with the squalid aspect of his establishment, and his utter disregard of the advantages of dress. When at Rome, we have it settled to a painful certainty, that he wore a gold-laced hat; and there is no reason to doubt but that the rest of his dress corresponded—but how unlike the enthusiast of the Sistine was the enthusiast of the

Adelphi! His dress was coarse and mean; this arose partly from affectation—but not wholly so. His income was small and uncertain, and he was too proud and honest to dress fashionably at the expense of others. The man who contests the matter with fortune, will sometimes be worsted; and we must pity, not blame, the consequences of such distress. That he was never rich, there can be no doubt—but that he was never in want is also certain: and it is very probable that he flattered himself with thinking, that men would say as he passed by, “that is Barry, the restorer of the antique spirit in art, and the painter of the Six Pictures in the Adelphi.—See how coarsely he is clad, and how careless he is,” and that he would be honoured more for the breach than the observance of custom in such matters.

His residence in Castle Street, though wearing a decent exterior when he took possession, soon corresponded in look with the outward man of its master. The worst inn's worst room, in which the poet places the expiring Villiers, was equalled, if not surpassed, by that in which Barry slept, ate, and meditated in perfect satisfaction and security. His own character and whole system of in-door economy, were exhibited in a dinner he gave Mr. Burke. No one was better acquainted with the singular manners of this very singular man than the great statesman; he wished, however, to have ocular demonstration how he managed his household concerns in the absence of wife or servant, and requested to be asked to dinner. “Sir,” said Barry, with much cheerfulness, “you know I live alone—but if you will come and

help me to eat a steak, I shall have it tender and hot, and from the most classic market in London—that of Oxford.” The day and the hour came, and Burke arriving at No. 36, Castle Street, found Barry ready to receive him; he was conducted into the painting room, which had undergone no change since it was a carpenter’s shop. On one of the walls hung his large picture of Pandora, and round it were placed the studies of the Six Pictures of the Adelphi. There were likewise old straining frames—old sketches—a printing press, with which he printed his plates with his own hand—the labours too of the spider abounded, and rivalled in extent and colour pieces of old tapestry.

Burke saw all this—yet wisely seemed to see it not. He observed too that most of the windows were broken or cracked, that the roof, which had no ceiling, admitted the light through many crevices in the tiling, and that two old chairs and a deal table composed the whole of the furniture. The fire was burning brightly; the steaks were put on to broil, and Barry, having spread a clean cloth on the table, put a pair of tongs in the hands of Burke, saying, “Be useful, my dear friend, and look to the steaks till I fetch the porter.” Burke did as he was desired: the painter soon returned with the porter in his hand, exclaiming, “What a misfortune! the wind carried away the fine foaming top as I crossed Titchfield Street:” they sat down together—the steak was tender and done to a moment—the artist was full of anecdote, and Burke often declared, that he never spent a happier evening in his life. Such is the story which has been often written and often repeated, and

always with variations. Something like the scene thus disclosed to Mr. Burke was exhibited some time afterwards to another eminent person—whose friendship has enabled me to enrich my narrative with the following graphic account:—

“ I wish (says Mr. Southey) I could tell you anything which might be found useful in your succeeding volumes. I knew Barry, and have been admitted into his den in his worst (that is to say his maddest) days, when he was employed upon the *Pandora*. He wore at that time an old coat of green baize ; but from which time had taken all the green that incrustations of paint and dirt had not covered. His wig was one which you might suppose he had borrowed from a scare-crow ; all round it there projected a fringe of his own gray hair. He lived alone in a house which was never cleaned ; and he slept on a bedstead with no other furniture than a blanket nailed on the one side. I wanted him to visit me—no, he said ; he could not go out by day, because he could not spare time from his great picture : and if he went out in the evening, the Academicians would waylay him, and murder him. In this solitary sullen life he continued, till he fell ill, very probably from want of food sufficiently nourishing ; and after lying two or three days under his blanket, he had just strength enough left to crawl to his own door, open it, and lay himself down, with a paper in his hand, on which he had written his wish to be carried to the house of Mr. Carlisle (Sir Anthony) in Soho Square. There he was taken care of ; and the danger from which he had thus escaped seems to have cured his mental hallucinations. He cast

his slough afterwards ; appeared decently drest in his own gray hair, and mixed in such society as he liked.

" I should have told you, that a little before his illness, he had, with much persuasion, been induced to pass a night at some person's house in the country. When he came down to breakfast the next morning, and one asked how he had rested, he said, remarkably well : he had not slept in sheets for many years, and really he thought it was a very comfortable thing. He interlarded his conversation with oaths as expletives, but it was pleasant to converse with him :—there was a frankness and animation about him which won good-will, as much as his vigorous intellect commanded respect. There is a story of his having refused to paint portraits, and saying, in answer to applications, that there was a man in Leicester Square who did it. But this, he said, was false : for that he would at any time have painted portraits, and have been glad to paint them."

It was during these periods of misgiving and despondency that Barry thought of requesting a situation of moderate emolument from the government—he saw places of little labour and large profit filled by men of ordinary ability—and he thought ministers would prefer the help of the clever, if it were offered, to that of the dull. He failed to perceive that service of another kind than he could hope to render was the purchase-price of such situations. He applied for the place of painter to the ordnance department—he knew so little of what he asked for, that he was surprised to find that it was house-painting only, and

that the profits arose from the extent of the contracts ; he next applied for the situation of serjeant-painter to the court, but withdrew his memorial on discovering that the salary was only eighteen pounds a year. His income at this time was necessarily very limited. From the funds he had sixty pounds a year, which paid his house-rent and taxes ; from the Academy he derived thirty pounds a year, as professor of painting ; and it has been calculated that the sale of his prints brought annually £50 more. On eighty pounds a year, then, this eminent artist had to exist, and provide the materials of his profession—no wonder that his dress was mean and the appearance of his house sordid ! Yet such was his independent spirit, and such his frugal habits, that he was never known either to borrow money or want it ; and it was his honest pride that he preferred selling prints to strangers rather than to friends, nor would he sell to either if they chanced to utter a word unfavourable to his style of engraving.

He had even contrived to save something out of his pittance. To all appearance he was the poorest of the poor, and there was nothing about his house to tempt the spoiler : but thieves are a sagacious race ; they formed their own conclusions, and in an inroad on the painter's establishment ferreted out about £400 and carried the money clear off. The public were astonished to hear of the extent of his loss ; and their astonishment increased when Barry, in a formal placard, exculpated common thieves, and attributed his loss to the thirty-nine members of the Royal Academy. The nephews of Timothy Hollis—John Hollis, and Hollis Ed-

wards, sent him at this juncture a present of £50: it is pleasant to see benevolence descend like an inheritance.

Barry was in his fifty-first year when Sir Joshua Reynolds, full of years and fame, was removed from the world. For a long course of years they had lived in hostility; but in the contest the former alone had been the sufferer. Admiration of the antique, and of Michael Angelo, had brought Barry to a steak broiled with his own hands, and a pot of porter drawn by a suspicious publican. The theory which led him to this was not more his own than the President's; but this only made matters worse: he looked upon Reynolds as a voluntary traitor to the great cause—as a renegade to the principles which he advocated and taught; and he openly upbraided him with a mean love of gain in following the lucrative trade of portraiture. The friends of Reynolds replied, that this was the only line of art in which a painter could live like a gentleman, and that his performances were more than mere likenesses—that they partook very largely of the great historic style, and exhibited, in short, an English application of the principles of Michael Angelo. Barry, for a long time, closed his eyes on this ingenious theory, and continued his reproaches: but it is pleasing to be told, as we are by Dr. Fryer, that “for several years before Sir Joshua’s death this hostility had ceased; that they had at length the good sense and candour to acknowledge each other’s deserts, and were not a little chagrined that any misunderstanding should ever have clouded their free intercourse.”

On the death of Reynolds, Barry came to the Academy and pronounced a glowing eulogium upon him as a man and an artist. This change astonished many, but it was consistent with his character: he was of an open and generous nature, easily kindled into anger, not difficult to appease, and liable, like most violent men, to those sudden revulsions of feeling which surprise friends and perplex biographers. His eloquence was rewarded: the niece of Sir Joshua, the Marchioness of Thomond, made him a present of her uncle's painting-chair—it was borne home in triumph to Castle Street, and a letter of thanks addressed to the lady, in which he compared the gift with the celebrated chair of Pindar, which was shown so many years in the porch of Olympia. With better feeling he reflected that it had been instrumental in “perpetuating the negligent honest exteriors of the authors of the Rambler and the Traveller;” and that it had been pressed “by Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse;” and concluded by declaring, that in him it should find a reverential conservator whilst God permitted it to remain under his care.\*

Barry, having obtained what (with his notions and habits) amounted to independence, employed his time much to his own liking: he had long indulged the wish to paint the Progress of Theology—and his famous picture of Pandora was the com-

\* On the death of Barry, this celebrated chair found its way, after a variety of fortune, into the hands of an auctioneer, whose hammer at length consigned it to the studio of Sir Thomas Lawrence. Death has again interposed, and the painting-chairs of those two eminent men must seek other sanctuaries.

mencement of the series. He began these designs soon after the completion of the Adelphi pictures—they were often set aside, and again resumed—disappointment by degrees laid a chilling hand upon him—and he was visited too by those misgivings of spirit to which the sons of genius are peculiarly heirs. The Progress of the Mosaic Doctrines, however, was sketched; and something like the first conceptions for the pieces designed to embody the coming of our Saviour could be traced at his death amongst the chaos of his papers. Of a great work thus imperfectly shadowed out, who can give any account? Rude sketches may indicate the main purpose and aim, but these are liable to such changes in the execution, that a finished work rarely corresponds with the original design.

At intervals, while this undertaking was his regular task, he sought refreshment in the pleasures of controversy, and wrote and published his celebrated Letter to the Dilettanti Society. In this work—which is neither commendable in aim nor temperate in language—he embodied almost all his disputes with mankind collectively and individually. After describing the leading principles of national art—the objects which the Royal Academy had been instituted to accomplish, and the purposes to which their money, as well as their energies, ought to be directed—Barry plunged into the actual conduct of the Academy's affairs—denounced private combinations and jealousies—asserted that the funds were dissipated by secret intrigues—and, as a finishing touch to this picture of weakness and corruption, proposed,

seriously to all appearance, that whenever the judgment of the body was appealed to, the honest vote of each member should be secured by oath !

On the appearance of this bitter diatribe in 1797, the whole Academy, with the exception of Joseph Nollekens, declared war against the Professor of Painting. That Barry should have lost his temper can surprise no one ; but that a public body, composed of the assembled talent in art of a great nation, should have lost temper too, must remain a matter of surprise to all : yet so it happened. The whole Academy was in commotion—Farington read aloud the Letter to the Dilettanti Society—information of personal irregularities was given by Messrs. Dance and Daniell—and Wilton, the sculptor, and at that period Keeper, embodied the charges in compliance with the direction of the committee. They accused James Barry of making digressions in his lectures, in which he abused members of the Academy—the dead as well as the living ; of teaching the students habits of insubordination, and countenancing them in licentious and disorderly behaviour ; of charging the Academy with voting in pensions among themselves sixteen thousand pounds, which should have been laid out for the benefit of the students ; and, finally, of having spoken unhandsomely of the President, Benjamin West.

With the haste of anger, the Academy proceeded to act upon these charges. The accused was allowed no copy of the indictment—was permitted to say nothing in explanation or defence—was formally degraded from his station of Professor—and expelled the Academy,—nay,—that nothing

might be wanting to prove to the world the severities which public bodies can with impunity commit,—the sanction of the King had been obtained to all these proceedings—before it was communicated to Barry that his name was for ever removed from the roll of academicians. These measures, which will always be pronounced by far too precipitate, sounded, at the time, about as strangely in ears unaccustomed to the bickerings and animosities which prevail in most corporate bodies, as poor Barry's own wild extravagance, when he classed the academicians with thieves and house-breakers—and imagined his person and property the object of professional conspiracies.

His friends flattered themselves that he was now done with debates—and would at length find leisure to finish those great works in which he had made some progress. In order that he might be secured against want, and to repair the loss of the thirty pounds a-year of which his brethren had so ungracefully, if not unjustly, deprived him, they proposed to gather such a sum by subscription as would purchase a decent annuity. It was at this time of distress that the Earl of Buchan, among others, stood forward in Barry's behalf. This nobleman desired to be thought public director in all matters of poetry and painting in Scotland. He spent his long life in speaking kind words, writing encouraging letters, and dispensing patronizing looks to all who had visited the Vatican, or were found loitering about the nether regions of Parnassus. On this occasion he stirred himself more than was his wont, and astonished many by publicly subscribing ten pounds; he also interceded

with the Society of Arts, and applied to many who thought favourably of Barry's talents. I wish he had done no more. He praised the set of proof engravings which Barry sent in a present to Dryburgh—fell in love with others which were in London—longed to possess an “easel picture” as a memorial of friendship—condescended to name the picture he particularly affected, *The Interview of Milton with Elwood the Quaker*—and, finally, requested in addition a proof engraving from the *Birth of Pandora*. The painter, pleased with all this condescension, sent a sketch of his *Milton* to the noble speculator in subscriptions; and the “easel picture” would have followed—but that hand was soon to be laid upon Barry which has recently fallen on his disinterested patron.

One thousand pounds in course of time were subscribed, and an annuity of corresponding value was purchased of Sir Robert Peel;—but all this kindness came too late.

He was now in the sixty-fifth year of his age; his health was generally good, and his frame, naturally strong, had been hardened with his ways of living, and promised to endure for many years. He had softened too the asperities of his manners, and, though the extasy of early thought was abated, many noble paintings were expected from his hand, now that at length his mind was eased by what he considered affluence, and he had no longer either committees or councils to disturb him. During the years which had passed since his expulsion from the Academy, he had been engaged on his great work on theology; but a large

piece now grew slowly under his hand—and indeed he appears never to have possessed that dashing alacrity of composition which distinguished most of the great Italian masters. He had been employed too, from time to time, upon his engravings; but upon the whole it may be said that, during these latter years of his life, he had mused much and wrought little. Nevertheless, high hopes were still entertained by his well-wishers.

No previous illness had given him warning when, on the evening of the sixth of February, 1806, he was seized, as he entered the house where he usually dined, with the cold fit of a pleuritic fever, of so intense a degree that all his powers were suspended, and he could neither speak nor move. Cordials were administered; he came a little to himself, and was conveyed in a coach to his own house; but some idle boys had plugged the key-hole with dirt and pebbles, and the door could not be opened. The night was dark and cold; he was shivering with disease, and a person who accompanied him carried him to the house of Mr. Bonomi. A bed was procured in the neighbourhood. Barry was laid down. He desired to be left alone, and bolted the door. So well were his orders obeyed, that he remained for forty hours without medical aid, and when it came it was too late. The disease had struck him mortally; a hot fit had succeeded the cold one, and he complained of a burning pain in his side and of difficulty of breathing. Ill as he was he left his bed on the afternoon of the eighth, and repaired, pale and tottering, to Dr. Fryer, to make his complaint. He

had a pain in his side, a short and incessant cough, quick and feeble pulse. He related that his friend Bonomi had made arrangements for receiving him into his house, spoke with warm feeling of the kindness of Mrs. Bonomi, and said how happy he would be there compared to under his own roof, where he had neither a servant nor a comfortable bed. Dr. Fryer requested him to go to his friend's house immediately, as he was more fit for his bed than making visits.

He went accordingly to Mr. Bonomi's, and thenceforth Dr. Fryer and Dr. Combe attended him constantly; but all skill was in vain. As the disease gained head he was warned of his approaching dissolution, and he heard of it as a thing neither to be desired nor dreaded. He conversed occasionally with much cheerfulness, and, having lingered till the twenty-second of February, expired in tranquillity and peace in the sixty-fifth year of his age. The Royal Academy had never proclaimed peace between them and their former Professor, and they now allowed his dust to remain unhonoured. The Society of Arts permitted his body to be borne from the hall of the Adelphi, which his genius had adorned, and Sir Robert Peel, who by the painter's sudden death had made a profitable bargain in the matter of the annuity, generously gave two hundred pounds to pay for his funeral, and raise a tablet in St. Paul's to his memory.

This conduct of the Academy was, no doubt, conformable to etiquette; but Barry, though he had sinned against their rules, had done nothing to lower him in the general estimation of mankind.

He might be in their eyes a degraded Academician —no one could call him a degraded artist; and the remains, at least, of a man of genius had surely a claim to some concession at their hands. But a certain air of loftiness, it would seem, belongs to that body collectively, which its members ever claim individually. The sway of Reynolds was resented so far, that numbers refused their concurrence to having his body laid out in state, as it is called, in their rooms, before interment. If their dignity required this severity in the case of one whose genius had in a great degree created and supported them, it required more in the case of him who had satirized and reproached them as men mean in spirit—whose mental vision was narrow, and who could only be credited on oath. They did accordingly what they could: they allowed Barry to be borne to his grave by hands that had never touched a pencil.

James Barry said seriously of himself, “I am a pock-pitted hard-featured little fellow.” He was in person under the middle size—the vicissitudes of fortune, frequent controversies, and bitter disappointments, had impressed in early life the aspect of years upon his brow—his face was naturally grave and saturnine, which gave uncommon sweetness to his smile, and great fierceness to his anger. If we lament his unhappy temper, we cannot refuse praise to the fortitude which baffled all manner of discomfort: he resided, without a murmur, in a house the perfect image of desolation—the rent walls admitted the wind, the shattered roof let in the rain: and there, without a servant—without even a decent bed, the compa-

nion of poverty and solitude, he painted many noble works. When he commenced his far-famed Six Pictures, he was advised by one who loved him, to take a better house, wear better clothes, hire a steady servant, and set up a neat establishment. Barry answered—"The pride of honesty protests against such a rash speculation." Many are the stories which have been told concerning this singular man—they are chiefly ludicrous tales of privation and pride; such as are gladly remembered by those who love whatever lowers genius to their own level, and who are as incapable of honouring amidst eccentricities what is high-minded and noble, as a pocket loadstone is of picking up an anchor.

Barry was the greatest enthusiast in art which this country ever produced—his passion for it almost amounted to madness; and but for his works, his words and actions might have been gravely cited in proof of mental alienation. He hungered and he thirsted, not figuratively, but truly, for its sake; and from boyhood to the tomb devoted all his faculties to establish a School of Painting, which, avoiding common or familiar subjects, should embody only what is dignified, magnificent or sublime. To this high task he brought an imagination second only to that of Fuseli, a strong love of the poetry of nature, an intimate knowledge of the works of the great masters, a deep feeling for their excellencies, fine skill of hand, and unequalled fortitude and perseverance. That he failed to reap the harvest which such qualities and attainments promised, must be imputed mainly to his infirmity of temper, but

partly also to what he so often complained of, the unawakened taste of the country for works of an historical nature. He wanted that graceful spirit which conciliates and persuades—which, like the fabled cestus of the goddess,

“ Can from the wisest win their best resolves.”

There were few at that time to patronize historical painting, save his Majesty, and West monopolized all subjects for the palaces, both sacred and profane. Portrait painters were the prosperous in British art; and few, save themselves, found the way to the tables and to the confidence of the great. Nor indeed, little as it was then, has the love of historical painting increased among us since; all the efforts of his present Majesty, of Sir George Beaumont, Sir John Leycester, Sir John Swinborne, Lord Lansdowne, Lord Egremont, the Duke of Bedford, and a few others, have been nearly in vain.

Other reasons, however, may be assigned for Barry's want of success. His first picture, the Legend of St. Patrick, was right—it was one of his own island's traditions—in it he heard the voice of Nature, and he who obeys her will seldom err. But afterwards the miracles of Greece and the Vatican oppressed and enthralled his fancy. The artist who disdains to work in the spirit of his own country will rarely work well in the spirit of any other. The names of Barry's pictures will tell where his heart was—Pandora, or the heathen Eve; the Conversion of Polemon in the presence of Xenocrates; the Birth of Venus; Philoctetes in Lemnos; Jupiter and Juno—and many more.

Affection for such subjects had long since fallen asleep, and it was not in the power of Barry to awaken it. To be truly classic he should have done for Britain what the artists of old did for Greece: their works are classical—not from being the offspring of a classic land, but because they were the embodied poetry of its actual beauty and sentiment.

He turned, when it was too late, to the pages of Milton. The subjects which he sketched from the *Paradise Lost* were made when he was advanced in life, and he never finished them. They were as follows:—Satan rising from the fiery gulf; the Temptation of Adam; Satan meeting with Sin and Death; Adam and Eve after the Fall; the Triumph of Michael and fall of the Rebel Angels.; Satan in Paradise; the Descent of the Guardian Angels; Satan detected by Ithuriel; and Adam's vision of the Misery of his Posterity. On several of these subjects Fuseli also tried his hand. They are such as require powers of an Epic order, and some of them seem to be above the grasp of our painter. But he shared largely in that kind of intrepidity of spirit which belonged to West and Fuseli: subjects of ordinary emotion had no charms for him: he loved to contemplate what was solemn and terrible; and his mind teemed with magnificent undertakings, which he wanted time or talent to realize. The multitude of his sketches, and the small number of his finished works, attest his immoderate ambition and his deficiency in some of those high qualities which, like the key-stone to an arch, are necessary to the completion of whatever is vast and grand.

His treatises, like his paintings, are distinguished by their vigour. Of the light and shade of language he was an indifferent master ; nor was he fastidious in neatness of arrangement, or nice in accuracy of reasoning : nevertheless, his earnestness of manner renders his writings very readable. His enthusiasm for pencils and chisels knows no bounds ; a painting with him is the first of human works, and a painter the noblest of God's creatures. Poetry, he assures us, requires little knowledge, and "the most perfect verse is no more than the animated account or relation of the story of a picture." Poetry, too, he says, (and with more truth,) is limited by its language to a particular country ; while Painting speaks all tongues, and is readable to all nations. Northcote, in his life of Reynolds, re-echoes Barry, and proposes to detect the presence of true poetry, by trying if it will turn into shape with the pencil ! There is, however, much of our finest poetry that would slip like quicksilver from the pencil of a greater than Mr. Northcote. If a poem be only the animated account of a picture, how many thousand pictures must that man paint who shall give us Shakespeare, or Milton, or Spenser, or Scott, or Southey, or Wordsworth, on canvas : and if poetry be only good when it presents such images as painters can copy, how many passages have age after age admired in vanity and in ignorance ! No one but a wild enthusiast, like Barry, would claim for any artist that ever breathed, an equality of mind with Homer, or Shakespeare, or Dante—men who have influenced the world from its centre to its circumference ; and as for Mr. Northcote's *test*—

the winged rapidity of poetry gives us, no doubt, in its lowest, as well as in its higher moods, many pictures, which the genius of art can embody ; but at the same time it presents us with images, so vivid and yet elusive, so distinct and yet so shadowy, as to set all art at defiance. Who shall paint Elijah's Mantle of Inspiration—the Still Small Voice—the War-Horse, whose neck is clothed with thunder, and who snuffeth the battle afar-off—the Magic Girdle of the Fairy Queen—or the Cestus of Homer's Venus, so exquisitely rendered by Cowper—

———— “ an ambush of sweet snares, replete  
With love, desire, soft intercourse of hearts,  
And music of resistless whispered sounds.”

---

---



## WILLIAM BLAKE.

---

PAINTING, like poetry, has followers, the body of whose genius is light compared to the length of its wings, and who, rising above the ordinary sympathies of our nature, are, like Napoleon, betrayed by a star which no eye can see save their own. To this rare class belonged William Blake.

He was the second son of James Blake and Catharine his wife, and born on the 28th of November, 1757, in 28, Broad Street, Carnaby Market, London. His father, a respectable hosier, caused him to be educated for his own business, but the love of art came early upon the boy ; he neglected the figures of arithmetic for those of Raphael and Reynolds ; and his worthy parents often wondered how a child of theirs should have conceived a love for such unsubstantial vanities. The boy, it seems, was privately encouraged by his mother. The love of designing and sketching grew upon him, and he desired anxiously to be an artist. His father began to be pleased with the notice which his son obtained—and to fancy that a painter's study might after all be a fitter place than a hosier's shop for one who drew designs on the backs of all the shop bills, and made sketches on the counter. He consulted an eminent artist, who

asked so large a sum for instruction, that the prudent shopkeeper hesitated, and young Blake declared he would prefer being an engraver—a profession which would bring bread at least, and through which he would be connected with painting. It was indeed time to dispose of him. In addition to his attachment to art, he had displayed poetic symptoms—scraps of paper and the blank leaves of books were found covered with groups and stanzas. When his father saw sketches at the top of the sheet and verses at the bottom, he took him away to Basire, the engraver, in Green Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, and bound him apprentice for seven years. He was then fourteen years old.

It is told of Blake that at ten years of age he became an artist, and at twelve a poet. Of his boyish pencillings I can find no traces—but of his early intercourse with the Muse the proof lies before me in seventy pages of verse, written, he says, between his twelfth and his twentieth year, and published, by the advice of friends, when he was thirty. There are songs, ballads, and a dramatic poem; rude sometimes and unmelodious, but full of fine thought and deep and peculiar feeling. To those who love poetry for the music of its bells, these seventy pages will sound harsh and dissonant; but by others they will be more kindly looked upon. John Flaxman, a judge in all things of a poetic nature, was so touched with many passages, that he not only counselled their publication, but joined with a gentleman of the name of Matthews in the expense, and presented the printed sheets to the artist to dispose of for his own advantage. One of these productions is

an address to the Muses—a common theme, but sung in no common manner.

“ Whether on Ida’s shady brow,  
     Or in the chambers of the east,  
     The chambers of the sun, that now  
         From ancient melody have ceas’d;  
     Whether in heaven ye wander fair,  
         Or the green corners of the earth,  
         Or the blue regions of the air,  
             Where the melodious winds have birth;  
     Whether on crystal rocks ye rove,  
         Beneath the bosom of the sea,  
         Wandering in many a coral grove,  
             Fair Nine ! forsaking poesie;  
     How have ye left the ancient love,  
         That Bards of old enjoyed in you,—  
         The languid strings now scarcely move,  
             The sound is forced—the notes are few.”

The little poem called “ The Tiger” has been admired for the force and vigour of its thoughts by poets of high name. Many could weave smoother lines—few could stamp such living images.

“ Tiger! Tiger! burning bright  
     In the forest of the night,  
     What immortal hand or eye  
         Framed thy fearful symmetry?  
     In what distant deeps or skies  
         Burned the fervour of thine eyes?  
     On what wings dare he aspire—  
         What the hand dare seize the fire?  
     And what shoulder and what art  
         Could twist the sinews of thy heart?  
     When thy heart began to beat,  
         What dread hand formed thy dread feet?

What the hammer! what the chain!  
 Formed thy strength and forged thy brain?  
 What the anvil? What dread grasp  
 Dared thy deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spheres,  
 And sprinkled heaven with shining tears,  
 Did he smile, his work to see?  
 Did he who made the lamb make thee?"

In the dramatic poem of King Edward the Third there are many nervous lines, and even whole passages of high merit. The structure of the verse is often defective, and the arrangement inharmonious; but before the ear is thoroughly offended, it is soothed by some touch of deep melody and poetic thought. The princes and earls of England are conferring together on the eve of the battle of Cressy—the Black Prince takes Chandos aside, and says—

" Now we're alone, John Chandos, I'll unburthen  
 And breathe my hopes into the burning air—  
 Where thousand Deaths are posting up and down,  
 Commissioned to this fatal field of Cressy:  
 Methinks I see them arm my gallant soldiers,  
 And gird the sword upon each thigh, and fit  
 The shining helm, and string each stubborn bow,  
 And dancing to the neighing of the steeds;—  
 Methinks the shout begins—the battle burns;—  
 Methinks I see them perch on English crests,  
 And breathe the wild flame of fierce war upon  
 The thronged enemy."

In the same high poetic spirit Sir Walter Manny converses with a genuine old English warrior, Sir Thomas Dagworth.

" O, Dagworth!—France is sick!—the very sky,  
 Though sunshine light, it seems to me as pale

As is the fainting man on his death-bed,  
 Whose face is shown by light of one weak taper—  
 It makes me sad and sick unto the heart;  
 Thousands must fall to-day."

Sir Thomas answers.

"Thousands of souls must leave this prison-house  
 To be exalted to those heavenly fields  
 Where songs of triumph, psalms of victory,  
 Where peace, and joy, and love, and calm content,  
 Sit singing on the azure clouds, and strew  
 The flowers of heaven upon the banquet table.  
 Bind ardent hope upon your feet, like shoes,  
 And put the robe of preparation on.  
 The table, it is spread in shining heaven.  
 Let those who fight, fight in good steadfastness;  
 And those who fall shall rise in victory."

I might transcribe from these modest and unnoticed pages many such passages. It would be unfair not to mention that the same volume contains some wild and incoherent prose, in which we may trace more than the dawning of those strange, mystical, and mysterious fancies on which Blake subsequently misemployed his pencil. There is much that is weak, and something that is strong, and a great deal that is wild and mad, and all so strangely mingled, that little or no meaning can be assigned to it; it seems like a lamentation over the disasters which came on England during the reign of King John.

Though Blake lost himself sometimes in the enchanted region of song, he seems not to have neglected to make himself master of the graver, or to have forgotten his love of designs and sketches. He was a dutiful servant to Basire, and he studied occasionally under Flaxman and Fuseli; but it was

his chief delight to retire to the solitude of his room, and there make drawings, and illustrate these with verses, to be hung up together in his mother's chamber. He was always at work ; he called amusement idleness, sight-seeing vanity, and money-making the ruin of all high aspirations. "Were I to love money," he said, "I should lose all power of thought ; desire of gain deadens the genius of man. I might roll in wealth and ride in a golden chariot, were I to listen to the voice of parsimony. My business is not to gather gold, but to make glorious shapes, expressing god-like sentiments." The day was given to the graver, by which he earned enough to maintain himself respectably ; and he bestowed his evenings upon painting and poetry, and intertwined these so closely in his compositions, that they cannot well be separated.

When he was six-and-twenty years old, he married Katharine Boutecher, a young woman of humble connexions—the dark-eyed Kate of several of his lyric poems. She lived near his father's house, and was noticed by Blake for the whiteness of her hand, the brightness of her eyes, and a slim and handsome shape, corresponding with his own notions of sylphs and naiads. As he was an original in all things, it would have been out of character to fall in love like an ordinary mortal ; he was describing one evening in company the pains he had suffered from some capricious lady or another, when Katharine Boutecher said, "I pity you from my heart." "Do you pity me?" said Blake, "then I love you for that." "And I love you," said the frank-hearted lass, and so the courtship began.

He tried how well she looked in a drawing, then how her charms became verse ; and finding moreover that she had good domestic qualities, he married her. They lived together long and happily.

She seemed to have been created on purpose for Blake :—she believed him to be the finest genius on earth ; she believed in his verse—she believed in his designs ; and to the wildest flights of his imagination she bowed the knee, and was a worshipper. She set his house in good order, prepared his frugal meal, learned to think as he thought, and, indulging him in his harmless absurdities, became, as it were, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. She learned—what a young and handsome woman is seldom apt to learn—to despise gaudy dresses, costly meals, pleasant company, and agreeable invitations—she found out the way of being happy at home, living on the simplest of food, and contented in the homeliest of clothing. It was no ordinary mind which could do all this ; and she whom Blake emphatically called his “beloved,” was no ordinary woman. She wrought off in the press the impressions of his plates—she coloured them with a light and neat hand—made drawings much in the spirit of her husband’s compositions, and almost rivalled him in all things save in the power which he possessed of seeing visions of any individual living or dead, whenever he chose to see them.

His marriage, I have heard, was not agreeable to his father ; and he then left his roof and resided with his wife in Green Street, Leicester Fields. He returned to Broad Street, on the death of his father, a devout man, and an honest shopkeeper,

of fifty years' standing, took a first floor and a shop, and in company with one Parker, who had been his fellow-apprentice, commenced printseller. His wife attended to the business, and Blake continued to engrave, and took Robert, his favourite brother, for a pupil. This speculation did not succeed—his brother too sickened and died; he had a dispute with Parker—the shop was relinquished, and he removed to 28, Poland Street. Here he commenced that series of works which give him a right to be numbered among the men of genius of his country. In sketching designs, engraving plates, writing songs, and composing music, he employed his time, with his wife sitting at his side, encouraging him in all his undertakings. As he drew the figure he meditated the song which was to accompany it, and the music to which the verse was to be sung, was the offspring too of the same moment. Of his music there are no specimens—he wanted the art of noting it down—if it equalled many of his drawings, and some of his songs, we have lost melodies of real value.

The first fruits were the “*Songs of Innocence and Experience*,” a work original and natural, and of high merit, both in poetry and in painting. It consists of some sixty-five or seventy scenes, presenting images of youth and manhood—of domestic sadness, and fireside joy—of the gaiety, and innocence, and happiness of childhood. Every scene has its poetical accompaniment, curiously interwoven with the group or the landscape, and forming, from the beauty of the colour and the prettiness of the pencilling, a very fair picture of itself. Those designs are in general highly poetical; more

allied, however, to heaven than to earth,—a kind of spiritual abstractions, and indicating a better world and fuller happiness than mortals enjoy. The picture of Innocence is introduced with the following sweet verses.

“ Piping down the valleys wild,  
 Piping songs of pleasant glee,  
 On a cloud I saw a child,  
 And he laughing said to me—  
 Pipe a song about a lamb;  
 So I piped with merry cheer.  
 Piper, pipe that song again—  
 So I piped—he wept to hear.  
 Drop thy pipe, thy happy pipe,  
 Sing thy songs of happy cheer—  
 So I sung the same again,  
 While he wept with joy to hear.  
 Piper, sit thee down and write  
 In a book that all may read—  
 So he vanished from my sight:  
 And I plucked a hollow reed,  
 And I made a rural pen,  
 And I stained the water clear,  
 And I wrote my happy songs,  
 Every child may joy to hear.”

Another song, called “The Chimney Sweeper,” is rude enough truly, but yet not without pathos.

“ When my mother died I was very young,  
 And my father sold me while yet my tongue  
 Could scarcely cry—weep! weep! weep!  
 So your chimneys I clean and in soot I sleep.

There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head,  
 That curl'd like a lamb's back, was shaved; so I said,  
 Hush, Tom, never mind it, for when your head's bare,  
 You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair.

And so he was quiet—and on that very night,  
As Tommy was sleeping, he had such a sight ;  
There thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned, and Jack,  
Were all of them locked up in coffins of black ;  
And by came an Angel, who had a bright key,  
He opened the coffins and set them all free ;  
Then down a green vale, leaping, laughing they run,  
And wash in a river, and shine like the sun.

Then, naked and white, all their bags left behind,  
They rise up on pure clouds and sport in the wind :  
And the Angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy,  
He'd have God for his father and never want joy.

And so Tommy awoke and we rose in the dark,  
And got with our bags and our brushes to work ;  
Though the morning was cold, he was happy and warm,  
So, if all do their duty, they need not fear harm."

In a higher and better spirit he wrought with his pencil. But then he imagined himself under spiritual influences; he saw the forms and listened to the voices of the worthies of other days; the past and the future were before him, and he heard, in imagination, even that awful voice which called on Adam amongst the trees of the garden. In this kind of dreaming abstraction, he lived much of his life; all his works are stamped with it; and though they owe much of their mysticism and obscurity to the circumstance, there can be no doubt that they also owe to it much of their singular loveliness and beauty. It was wonderful that he could thus, month after month, and year after year, lay down his graver after it had won him his daily wages, and retire from the battle for bread, to disport his fancy amid scenes of more than earthly splendour, and creatures pure as unfallen dew.

In this lay the weakness and the strength of

Blake, and those who desire to feel the character of his compositions, must be familiar with his history and the peculiarities of his mind. He was by nature a poet, a dreamer, and an enthusiast. The eminence which it had been the first ambition of his youth to climb, was visible before him, and he saw on its ascent or on its summit those who had started earlier in the race of fame. He felt conscious of his own merit, but was not aware of the thousand obstacles which were ready to interpose. He thought that he had but to sing songs and draw designs, and become great and famous. The crosses which genius is heir to had been wholly unforeseen—and they befel him early; he wanted too the skill of hand, and fine tact of fancy and taste, to impress upon the offspring of his thoughts that popular shape, which gives such productions immediate circulation. His works were therefore looked coldly on by the world, and were only esteemed by men of poetic minds, or those who were fond of things out of the common way. He earned a little fame, but no money by these speculations, and had to depend for bread on the labours of the graver.

All this neither crushed his spirit, nor induced him to work more in the way of the world; but it had a visible influence upon his mind. He became more seriously thoughtful, avoided the company of men, and lived in the manner of a hermit, in that vast wilderness, London. Necessity made him frugal, and honesty and independence prescribed plain clothes, homely fare, and a cheap habitation. He was thus compelled more than ever to retire to worlds of his own creating, and seek

solace in visions of paradise for the joys which the earth denied him. By frequent indulgence in these imaginings, he gradually began to believe in the reality of what dreaming fancy painted—the pictured forms which swarmed before his eyes assumed, in his apprehension, the stability of positive revelations, and he mistook the vivid figures, which his professional imagination shaped, for the poets, and heroes, and princes of old. Amongst his friends, he at length ventured to intimate that the designs on which he was engaged, were not from his own mind, but copied from grand works revealed to him in visions ; and those who believed that, would readily lend an ear to the assurance that he was commanded to execute his performances by a celestial tongue !

Of these imaginary visitations he made good use, when he invented his truly original and beautiful mode of engraving and tinting his plates. He had made the designs of his *Days of Innocence*, and was meditating, he said, on the best means of multiplying their resemblance in form and in hue ; he felt sorely perplexed. At last he was made aware that the spirit of his favourite brother Robert was in the room, and to this celestial visitor he applied for counsel. The spirit advised him at once : “ write,” he said, “ the poetry, and draw the designs upon the copper with a certain liquid (which he named, and which Blake ever kept a secret); then cut the plain parts of the plate down with aquafortis, and this will give the whole, both poetry and figures, in the manner of a stereotype.” The plan recommended by this gracious spirit was adopted; the plates were engraved, and the work

printed off. The artist then added a peculiar beauty of his own. He tinted both the figures and the verse with a variety of colours, amongst which, while yellow prevails, the whole has a rich and lustrous beauty, to which I know little that can be compared. The size of these prints is four inches and an half high by three inches wide. The original genius of Blake was always confined, through poverty, to small dimensions. Sixty-five plates of copper were an object to him who had little money. The Gates of Paradise, a work of sixteen designs, and those exceedingly small, was his next undertaking. The meaning of the artist is not a little obscure; it seems to have been his object to represent the innocence, the happiness, and the upward aspirations of man. They bespeak one intimately acquainted with the looks and the feelings of children. Over them there is shed a kind of mysterious halo which raises feelings of devotion. The Songs of Innocence, and the Gates of Paradise, became popular among the collectors of prints. To the sketch-book and the cabinet the works of Blake are unfortunately confined.

If there be mystery in the meaning of the Gates of Paradise, his succeeding performance, by name URIZEN, has the merit or the fault of surpassing all human comprehension. The spirit which dictated this strange work was undoubtedly a dark one; nor does the strange kind of prose which is intermingled with the figures serve to enlighten us. There are in all twenty-seven designs, representing beings human, demoniac, and divine, in situations of pain and sorrow and suffering. One character—evidently an evil spirit—appears in most of the

plates; the horrors of hell, and the terrors of darkness and divine wrath, seem his sole portion. He swims in gulphs of fire—descends in cataracts of flame—holds combats with scaly serpents, or writhes in anguish without any visible cause. One of his exploits is to chase a female soul through a narrow gate and hurl her headlong down into a darksome pit. The wild verses, which are scattered here and there, talk of the sons and the daughters of Urizen. He seems to have extracted these twenty-seven scenes out of many visions—what he meant by them even his wife declared she could not tell, though she was sure they had a meaning, and a fine one. Something like the fall of Lucifer and the creation of Man is dimly visible in this extravagant work; it is not a little fearful to look upon; a powerful, dark, terrible, though undefined and indescribable, impression is left on the mind—and it is in no haste to be gone. The size of the designs is four inches by six; they bear date, “Lambeth, 1794.” He had left Poland Street, and was residing in Hercules Buildings.

The name of Blake began now to be known a little, and Edwards, the bookseller, employed him to illustrate Young's Night Thoughts. The reward in money was small, but the temptation in fame was great: the work was performed something in the manner of old books with illuminated margins. Along the ample margins which the poetry left on the page the artist sketched his fanciful creations; contracting or expanding them according to the space. Some of those designs were in keeping with the poems, but there were others which alarmed fastidious people: the serious

and the pious were not prepared to admire shapes trembling in nudity round the verses of a grave divine. In the exuberance of Young there are many fine figures; but they are figures of speech only, on which art should waste none of its skill. This work was so much, in many parts, to the satisfaction of Flaxman, that he introduced Blake to Hayley the poet, who, in 1800, persuaded him to remove to Felpham in Sussex, to make engravings for the Life of Cowper. To that place he accordingly went with his wife and sister, and was welcomed by Hayley with much affection. Of his journey and his feelings he gives the following account to Flaxman, whom he usually addressed thus, "Dear Sculptor of Eternity."

"We are arrived safe at our cottage, which is more beautiful than I thought it, and more convenient. It is a perfect model for cottages, and I think for palaces of magnificence, only enlarging and not altering its proportions, and adding ornaments and not principals. Nothing can be more grand than its simplicity and usefulness. Felpham is a sweet place for study, because it is more spiritual than London. Heaven opens here on all sides her golden gates; her windows are not obstructed by vapours; voices of celestial inhabitants are more distinctly heard, and their forms more distinctly seen, and my cottage is also a shadow of their houses. My wife and sister are both well, and are courting Neptune for an embrace."

Thus far had he written in the language and feelings of a person of upper air; though some of the expressions are tinctured with the peculiar enthusiasm of the man, they might find shelter under

the license of figurative speech, and pass muster as the poetic language of new-found happiness. Blake thus continues :—

“ And now begins a new life, because another covering of earth is shaken off. I am more famed in heaven for my works than I could well conceive. In my brain are studies and chambers filled with books and pictures of old, which I wrote and painted in ages of eternity before my mortal life, and those works are the delight and study of archangels. Why then should I be anxious about the riches or fame of mortality ? You, O dear Flaxman, are a sublime archangel, my friend and companion from eternity. Farewell, my dear friend, remember me and my wife in love and friendship to Mrs. Flaxman, whom we ardently desire to entertain beneath our thatched roof of russet gold.”

This letter, written in the year 1800, gives the true two-fold image of the author’s mind. During the day he was a man of sagacity and sense, who handled his graver wisely, and conversed in a wholesome and pleasant manner : in the evening, when he had done his prescribed task, he gave a loose to his imagination. While employed on those engravings which accompany the works of Cowper, he saw such company as the country where he resided afforded, and talked with Hayley about poetry with a feeling to which the author of the *Triumphs of Temper* was an utter stranger ; but at the close of day away went Blake to the sea shore to indulge in his own thoughts and

“ High converse with the dead to hold.”

Here he forgot the present moment and lived in

the past ; he conceived, verily, that he had lived in other days, and had formed friendships with Homer and Moses ; with Pindar and Virgil ; with Dante and Milton. These great men, he asserted, appeared to him in visions, and even entered into conversation. Milton, in a moment of confidence, entrusted him with a whole poem of his, which the world had never seen ; but unfortunately the communication was oral, and the poetry seemed to have lost much of its brightness in Blake's recitation. When asked about the looks of those visions, he answered, "They are all majestic shadows, gray but luminous, and superior to the common height of men." It was evident that the solitude of the country gave him a larger swing in imaginary matters. His wife often accompanied him to these strange interviews ; she saw nothing and heard as little, but she was certain that her husband both heard and saw.

Blake's mind at all times resembled that first page in the magician's book of gramoury, which made

"The cobweb on the dungeon wall,  
Seem tapestry in lordly hall."

His mind could convert the most ordinary occurrence into something mystical and supernatural. He often saw less majestic shapes than those of the poets of old. "Did you ever see a fairy's funeral, madam ?" he once said to a lady, who happened to sit by him in company. "Never, sir!" was the answer. "I have," said Blake, "but not before last night. I was walking alone in my garden, there was great stillness among the branches and

flowers and more than common sweetness in the air ; I heard a low and pleasant sound, and I knew not whence it came. At last I saw the broad leaf of a flower move, and underneath I saw a procession of creatures of the size and colour of green and gray grasshoppers, bearing a body laid out on a rose leaf, which they buried with songs, and then disappeared. It was a fairy funeral." It would, perhaps, have been better for his fame had he connected it more with the superstitious beliefs of his country—amongst the elves and fairies his fancy might have wandered at will—their popular character would perhaps have kept him within the bounds of traditional belief, and the sea of his imagination might have had a shore.

After a residence of three years in his cottage at Felpham, he removed to 17, South Molton Street, London, where he lived seventeen years. He came back to town with a fancy not a little exalted by the solitude of the country, and in this mood designed and engraved an extensive and strange work which he entitled "Jerusalem." A production so exclusively wild was not allowed to make its appearance in an ordinary way : he thus announced it. "After my three years' slumber on the banks of the ocean, I again display my giant forms to the public." Of these designs there are no less than an hundred ; what their meaning is the artist has left unexplained. It seems of a religious, political, and spiritual kind, and wanders from hell to heaven, and from heaven to earth ; now glancing into the distractions of our own days, and then making a transition to the antediluvians. The crowning defect is obscurity ; meaning seems now

and then about to dawn; you turn plate after plate, and read motto after motto, in the hope of escaping from darkness into light. But the first might as well be looked at last; the whole seems a riddle which no ingenuity can solve. Yet, if the work be looked at for form and effect rather than for meaning, many figures may be pronounced worthy of Michael Angelo. There is wonderful freedom of attitude and position; men, spirits, gods, and angels, move with an ease which makes one lament that we know not wherefore they are put in motion. Well might Hayley call him his "gentle visionary Blake." He considered the *Jerusalem* to be his greatest work, and for a set of the tinted engravings charged twenty-five guineas. Few joined the artist in his admiration. The *Jerusalem*, with all its giant forms, failed to force its way into circulation.

His next work was the *Illustrations of Blair's Grave*, which came to the world with the following commendation by Fuseli. "The author of the moral series before us, has endeavoured to awaken sensibility by touching our sympathies with nearer, less ambiguous, and less ludicrous imagery, than what mythology, gothic superstition, or symbols, as far fetched as inadequate could supply. His avocation has been chiefly employed to spread a familiar and domestic atmosphere round the most important of all subjects, to connect the visible and the invisible world without provoking probability, and to lead the eye from the milder light of time to the radiations of eternity." For these twelve "Inventions," as he called them, Blake received twenty guineas from Cromeck, the engraver—a man

of skill in art and taste in literature. The price was little, but nevertheless it was more than what he usually received for such productions; he also undertook to engrave them. But Blake's mode of engraving was as peculiar as his style of designing; it had little of that grace of execution about it which attracts customers, and the *Inventions*, after an experiment or two, were placed under the fashionable graver of Louis Schiavonetti. Blake was deeply incensed—he complained that he was deprived of the profit of engraving his own designs, and, with even less justice, that Schiavonetti was unfit for the task.

Some of these twelve *Inventions* are natural and poetic, others exhibit laborious attempts at the terrific and the sublime. The old Man at Death's Door is one of the best—in the Last Day there are fine groups and admirable single figures—the Wise Ones of the Earth pleading before the inexorable Throne, and the Descent of the Condemned, are creations of a high order. The Death of the Strong Wicked Man is fearful and extravagant, and the flames in which the soul departs from the body have no warrant in the poem or in belief. The Descent of Christ into the Grave is formal and tame; and the hoary old Soul, in the Death of the Good Man, travelling heavenward between two orderly Angels, required little outlay of fancy. The frontispiece—a naked Angel descending headlong and rousing the Dead with the Sound of the last Trumpet—alarmed the devout people of the north, and made maids and matrons retire behind their fans.

If the tranquillity of Blake's life was a little dis-

turbed by the dispute about the twelve “Inventions,” it was completely shaken by the controversy which now arose between him and Cromeck respecting his Canterbury Pilgrimage, and the famous one by Stothard. That two artists at one and the same time should choose the same subject for the pencil, seems scarcely credible—especially when such subject was not of a temporary interest. The coincidence here was so close, that Blake accused Stothard of obtaining knowledge of his design through Cromeck, while Stothard with equal warmth asserted that Blake had commenced his picture in rivalry of himself. Blake declared that Cromeck had actually commissioned him to paint the Pilgrimage before Stothard thought of his; to which Cromeck replied, that the order had been given in a vision, for he never gave it. Stothard, a man as little likely to be led aside from truth by love of gain as by visions, added to Cromeck’s denial the startling testimony that Blake visited him during the early progress of his picture, and expressed his approbation of it in such terms, that he proposed to introduce Blake’s portrait in the procession, as a mark of esteem. It is probable that Blake obeyed some imaginary revelation in this matter, and mistook it for the order of an earthly employer; but whether commissioned by a vision or by mortal lips, his Canterbury Pilgrimage made its appearance in an exhibition of his principal works in the house of his brother, in Broad Street, during the summer of 1809.

Of original designs, this singular exhibition contained sixteen—they were announced as chiefly “of a spiritual and political nature”—but then the

spiritual works and political feelings of Blake were unlike those of any other man. One piece represented "The Spiritual Form of Nelson guiding Leviathan." Another, "The Spiritual Form of Pitt guiding Behemoth." This, probably, confounded both divines and politicians; there is no doubt that plain men went wondering away. The chief attraction was the Canterbury Pilgrimage, not indeed from its excellence, but from the circumstance of its origin, which was well known about town, and pointedly alluded to in the catalogue. The picture is a failure. Blake was too great a visionary for dealing with such literal wantons as the Wife of Bath and her jolly companions. The natural flesh and blood of Chaucer prevailed against him. He gives grossness of body for grossness of mind,—tries to be merry and wicked—and in vain.

Those who missed instruction in his pictures, found entertainment in his catalogue, a wild performance, overflowing with the oddities and dreams of the author—which may be considered as a kind of public declaration of his faith concerning art and artists. His first anxiety is about his colours. "Colouring," says this new lecturer on the *Chiaro-Scuoro*, "does not depend on where the colours are put, but on where the lights and darks are put, and all depends on form or outline. Where that is wrong the colouring never can be right, and it is always wrong in Titian and Correggio, Rubens and Rembrandt; till we get rid of them we shall never equal Raphael and Albert Durer, Michael Angelo and Julio Romano. Clearness and precision have been my chief objects in painting these pictures—

clear colours and firm determinate lineaments, unbroken by shadows—which ought to display and not hide form, as is the practice of the later schools of Italy and Flanders. The picture of the Spiritual Form of Pitt, is a proof of the power of colours unsullied with oil or with any cloggy vehicle. Oil has been falsely supposed to give strength to colours, but a little consideration must show the fallacy of this opinion. Oil will not drink or absorb colour enough to stand the test of any little time and of the air. Let the works of artists since Rubens' time witness to the villany of those who first brought oil painting into general opinion and practice, since which we have never had a picture painted that would show itself by the side of an earlier composition. This is an awful thing to say to oil painters; they may call it madness, but it is true. All the genuine old little pictures are in fresco and not in oil."

Having settled the true principles and proper materials of colour, he proceeds to open up the mystery of his own productions. Those who failed to comprehend the pictures on looking at them, had only to turn to the following account of the Pitt and the Nelson. "These two pictures," he says, "are compositions of a mythological cast, similar to those Apotheoses of Persian, Hindoo, and Egyptian antiquity, which are still preserved in rude monuments, being copies from some stupendous originals now lost, or perhaps buried to some happier age. The Artist, having been taken, in vision, to the ancient republics, monarchies, and patriarchates of Asia, has seen those wonderful originals, called in the sacred Scriptures the che-

rubim, which were painted and sculptured on the walls of temples, towns, cities, palaces, and erected in the highly cultivated states of Egypt, Moab, and Edom, among the rivers of Paradise, being originals from which the Greeks and Hetrurians copied Hercules, Venus, Apollo, and all the ground-works of ancient art. They were executed in a very superior style to those justly admired copies, being with their accompaniments terrific and grand in the highest degree. The artist has endeavoured to emulate the grandeur of those seen in his vision, and to apply it to modern times on a smaller scale. The Greek Muses are daughters of Memory, and not of Inspiration or Imagination, and therefore not authors of such sublime conceptions : some of these wonderful originals were one hundred feet in height ; some were painted as pictures, some were carved as bass-relievos, and some as groups of statues, all containing mythological and recondite meaning. The artist wishes it was now the fashion to make such monuments, and then he should not doubt of having a national commission to execute those pictures of Nelson and Pitt on a scale suitable to the grandeur of the nation who is the parent of his heroes, in highly finished fresco, where the colours would be as permanent as precious stones."

The man who could not only write down, but deliberately correct the printer's sheets which recorded, matter so utterly wild and mad, was at the same time perfectly sensible to the exquisite nature of Chaucer's delineations, and felt rightly what sort of skill his inimitable Pilgrims required at the hand of an artist. He who saw visions in Cœle-Syria

and statues an hundred feet high, wrote thus concerning Chaucer: "The characters of his pilgrims are the characters which compose all ages and nations: as one age falls another rises, different to mortal sight, but to immortals only the same: for we see the same characters repeated again and again, in animals, in vegetables, and in men; nothing new occurs in identical existence. Accident ever varies; substance can never suffer change nor decay. Of Chaucer's characters, some of the names or titles are altered by time, but the characters themselves for ever remain unaltered, and consequently they are the physiognomies of universal human life, beyond which nature never steps. Names alter—things never alter; I have known multitudes of those who would have been monks in the age of monkery, who in this deistical age are deists. As Linnæus numbered the plants, so Chaucer numbered the classes of men."

His own notions and much of his peculiar practice in art are scattered at random over the pages of this curious production. His love of a distinct outline made him use close and clinging dresses; they are frequently very graceful—at other times they are constrained, and deform the figures which they so scantily cover. "The great and golden rule of art, (says he,) is this:—that the more distinct and sharp and wiry the bounding line, the more perfect the work of art; and the less keen and sharp this external line, the greater is the evidence of weak imitative plagiarism and bungling: Protogenes and Apelles knew each other by this line. How do we distinguish the oak from the beech, the horse from the ox; but by the

bounding outline? How do we distinguish one face or countenance from another, but by the bounding line and its infinite inflexions and movements? Leave out this line and you leave out life itself: all is chaos again, and the line of the Almighty must be drawn out upon it before man or beast can exist."

These abominations—concealed outline and tricks of colour—now bring on one of those visionary fits to which Blake was so liable, and he narrates with the most amusing wildness sundry revelations made to him concerning them. He informs us that certain painters were *demons*—let loose on earth to confound the “sharp wiry outline,” and fill men’s minds with fears and perturbations. He signifies that he himself was for some time a miserable instrument in the hands of Chiaro-Scuro demons, who employed him in making “experiment pictures in oil.” “These pictures,” says he, “were the result of temptations and perturbations labouring to destroy imaginative power by means of that infernal machine called Chiaro-Scuro, in the hands of Venetian and Flemish demons, who hate the Roman and Florentine schools. They cause that every thing in art shall become a machine; they cause that the execution shall be all blocked up with brown shadows; they put the artist in fear and doubt of his own original conception. The spirit of Titian was particularly active in raising doubts concerning the possibility of executing without a model. Rubens is a most outrageous demon, and by infusing the remembrances of his pictures, and style of execution, hinders all power of individual thought. Correggio is a soft and effeminate, consequently a most

cruel demon, whose whole delight is to cause endless labour to whoever suffers him to enter his mind." When all this is translated into the language of sublunary life, it only means that Blake was haunted with the excellencies of other men's works, and, finding himself unequal to the task of rivalling the soft and glowing colours and singular effects of light and shade of certain great masters, betook himself to the study of others not less eminent, who happened to have laid out their strength in outline.

The impression which the talents and oddities of Blake made on men of taste and genius, is well described by one whose judgment in whatever is poetical no one will question. Charles Lamb had communicated to James Montgomery's book on chimney sweepers the little song by Blake, which I have already quoted; it touched the feelings of Bernard Barton so deeply, that he made inquiries of his friend about the author, upon which he received the following letter in explanation, written some six years ago.—"Blake is a real name I assure you," says Lamb; "and a most extraordinary man he is if he be still living. He is the Blake whose wild designs accompany a splendid edition of Blair's Grave, which you may perhaps have seen or heard of; in one of which he pictures the parting of soul and body by a solid mass of human form floating off God knows how, from a lumpish mass—fac-simile to itself—left behind on the death-bed. He paints in water-colours marvellous strange pictures—visions of his brain which he asserts that he has seen. They have great merit. He has seen the old Welch bards on Snowdon,

He has seen the beautifullest, the strongest and the ugliest man left alive from the massacre of the Britons by the Romans, and has painted them from memory, (I have seen these paintings,) and asserts them to be as good as the figures of Raphael and Angelo, but not better, as they had precisely the same retro-visions and prophetic visions with himself. The painters in oil (which he will have it that neither of these great masters ever practised) he affirms to have been the ruin of art: and asserts, that all the while he was engaged on his water paintings, Titian was disturbing him—Titian, the evil genius of oil painting! His pictures—one in particular—the Canterbury Pilgrims, have wonderful power and spirit, but hard and dry, yet with grace. He has written a catalogue of them, with a most spirited criticism on Chaucer, but mystical and full of vision. I have heard of his poems but never seen them. There is one to a tiger, which I have heard recited, beginning

“Tiger, tiger, burning bright,  
Through the deserts of the night,”

which is glorious. But, alas! I have not the book, and the man is flown, whither I know not—to Hades, or a mad-house—but I must look on him as one of the most extraordinary persons of the age.”

To describe the conversations which Blake held in prose with demons and in verse with angels, would fill volumes, and an ordinary gallery could not contain all the heads which he drew of his visionary visitants. That all this was real, he himself most sincerely believed; nay, so infectious

was his enthusiasm, that some acute and sensible persons who heard him expatiate, shook their heads, and hinted that he was an extraordinary man, and that there might be something in the matter. One of his brethren, an artist of some note, employed him frequently in drawing the portraits of those who appeared to him in visions. The most propitious time for those "angel-visits" was from nine at night till five in the morning; and so docile were his spiritual sitters, that they appeared at the wish of his friends. Sometimes, however, the shape which he desired to draw was long in appearing, and he sat with his pencil and paper ready and his eyes idly roaming in vacancy; all at once the vision came upon him, and he began to work like one possest.

He was requested to draw the likeness of Sir William Wallace—the eye of Blake sparkled, for he admired heroes. "William Wallace!" he exclaimed, "I see him now—there, there, how noble he looks—reach me my things!" Having drawn for some time, with the same care of hand and steadiness of eye, as if a living sitter had been before him, Blake stopt suddenly, and said, "I cannot finish him—Edward the First has stept in between him and me." "That's lucky," said his friend, "for I want the portrait of Edward too." Blake took another sheet of paper, and sketched the features of Plantagenet; upon which his majesty politely vanished, and the artist finished the head of Wallace. "And pray, Sir," said a gentleman, who heard Blake's friend tell his story—"was Sir William Wallace an heroic-looking man? And what sort of personage was Edward?" The

answer was: “there they are, Sir, both framed and hanging on the wall behind you, judge for yourself.” “I looked (says my informant) and saw two warlike heads of the size of common life. That of Wallace was noble and heroic, that of Edward stern and bloody. The first had the front of a god, the latter the aspect of a demon.”

The friend who obliged me with these anecdotes on observing the interest which I took in the subject, said, “I know much about Blake—I was his companion for nine years. I have sat beside him from ten at night till three in the morning, sometimes slumbering and sometimes waking, but Blake never slept; he sat with a pencil and paper drawing portraits of those whom I most desired to see. I will show you, Sir, some of these works.” He took out a large book filled with drawings, opened it, and continued, “Observe the poetic fervour of that face—it is Pindar as he stood a conqueror in the Olympic games. And this lovely creature is Corinna, who conquered in poetry in the same place. That lady is Lais, the courtesan—with the impudence which is part of her profession, she stept in between Blake and Corinna, and he was obliged to paint her to get her away. There! that is a face of a different stamp—can you conjecture who he is?” “Some scoundrel, I should think, Sir.” “There now—that is a strong proof of the accuracy of Blake—he is a scoundrel indeed! The very individual task-master whom Moses slew in Egypt. And who is this now—only imagine who this is?” “Other than a good one, I doubt, Sir.” “You are right, it is a fiend—he resembles, and this is remarkable, two

men who shall be nameless; one is a great lawyer, and the other—I wish I durst name him—is a suborner of false witnesses. This other head now?—this speaks for itself—it is the head of Herod; how like an eminent officer in the army!"

He closed the book, and taking out a small panel from a private drawer, said, "this is the last which I shall show you; but it is the greatest curiosity of all. Only look at the splendour of the colouring and the original character of the thing!" "I see," said I, "a naked figure with a strong body and a short neck—with burning eyes which long for moisture, and a face worthy of a murderer, holding a bloody cup in his clawed hands, out of which it seems eager to drink. I never saw any shape so strange, nor did I ever see any colouring so curiously splendid—a kind of glistening green and dusky gold, beautifully varnished. But what in the world is it?" "It is a ghost, Sir—the ghost of a flea—a spiritualization of the thing!" "He saw this in a vision then," I said. "I'll tell you all about it, Sir. I called on him one evening, and found Blake more than usually excited. He told me he had seen a wonderful thing—the ghost of a flea! And did you make a drawing of him? I inquired. No, indeed, said he, I wish I had, but I shall, if he appears again! He looked earnestly into a corner of the room, and then said, here he is—reach me my things—I shall keep my eye on him. There he comes! his eager tongue whisking out of his mouth, a cup in his hand to hold blood, and covered with a scaly skin of gold and green;—as he described him so he drew him."

Visions, such as are said to arise in the sight of

those who indulge in opium, were frequently present to Blake, nevertheless he sometimes desired to see a spirit in vain. "For many years," said he, "I longed to see Satan—I never could believe that he was the vulgar fiend which our legends represent him—I imagined him a classic spirit, such as he appeared to him of Uz, with some of his original splendour about him. At last I saw him. I was going up stairs in the dark, when suddenly a light came streaming amongst my feet, I turned round, and there he was looking fiercely at me through the iron grating of my staircase window. I called for my things—Katherine thought the fit of song was on me, and brought me pen and ink—I said, hush!—never mind—this will do—as he appeared so I drew him—there he is." Upon this, Blake took out a piece of paper with a grated window sketched on it, while through the bars glared the most frightful phantom that ever man imagined. Its eyes were large and like live coals—its teeth as long as those of a harrow, and the claws seemed such as might appear in the distempered dream of a clerk in the Herald's office. "It is the gothic fiend of our legends, said Blake—the true devil—all else are apocryphal."

These stories are scarcely credible, yet there can be no doubt of their accuracy. Another friend, on whose veracity I have the fullest dependence, called one evening on Blake, and found him sitting with a pencil and a panel, drawing a portrait with all the seeming anxiety of a man who is conscious that he has got a fastidious sitter; he looked and drew, and drew and looked, yet no living soul was visible. "Disturb me not," said he, in a whisper,

"I have one sitting to me." "Sitting to you!" exclaimed his astonished visitor, "where is he, and what is he?—I see no one." "But I see him, Sir," answered Blake haughtily, "there he is, his name is Lot—you may read of him in the Scripture. *He is sitting for his portrait.*"

Had he always thought so idly, and wrought on such visionary matters, this memoir would have been the story of a madman, instead of the life of a man of genius, some of whose works are worthy of any age or nation. Even while he was indulging in these laughable fancies, and seeing visions at the request of his friends, he conceived, and drew, and engraved, one of the noblest of all his productions—the Inventions for the Book of Job. He accomplished this series in a small room, which served him for kitchen, bedchamber, and study, where he had no other companion but his faithful Katherine, and no larger income than some seventeen or eighteen shillings a week. Of these Inventions, as the artist loved to call them, there are twenty-one, representing the Man of Uz sustaining his dignity amidst the inflictions of Satan, the reproaches of his friends, and the insults of his wife. It was in such things that Blake shone; the Scripture overawed his imagination, and he was too devout to attempt aught beyond a literal embodying of the majestic scene. He goes step by step with the narrative; always simple, and often sublime—never wandering from the subject, nor overlaying the text with the weight of his own exuberant fancy.

The passages, embodied, will show with what lofty themes he presumed to grapple. 1. Thus

did Job continually. 2. The Almighty watches the good man's household. 3. Satan receiving power over Job. 4. The wind from the wilderness destroying Job's children. 5. And I alone am escaped to tell thee. 6. Satan smiting Job with sore boils. 7. Job's friends comforting him. 8. Let the day perish wherein I was born. 9. Then a spirit passed before my face. 10. Job laughed to scorn by his friends. 11. With dreams upon my bed thou scarest me — thou affrightest me with visions. 12. I am young and ye are old, wherefore I was afraid. 13. Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind. 14. When the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy. 15. Behold now Behemoth, which I made with thee. 16. Thou hast fulfilled the judgment of the wicked. 17. I have heard thee with the hearing of my ear, but now my eye rejoiceth in thee. 18. Also the Lord accepted Job. 19. Every one also gave him a piece of money. 20. There were not found women fairer than the daughters of Job. 21. So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning.

While employed on these remarkable productions, he was made sensible that the little approbation which the world had ever bestowed on him was fast leaving him. The waywardness of his fancy, and the peculiar execution of his compositions, were alike unadapted for popularity; the demand for his works lessened yearly from the time that he exhibited his Canterbury Pilgrimage; and he could hardly procure sufficient to sustain life, when old age was creeping upon him. Yet, poverty-stricken as he was, his cheerfulness never

forsook him—he uttered no complaint—he contracted no debt, and continued to the last manly and independent. It is the fashion to praise genius when it is gone to the grave—the fashion is cheap and convenient. Of the existence of Blake few men of taste could be ignorant—of his great merits multitudes knew, nor was his extreme poverty any secret. Yet he was reduced—one of the ornaments of the age—to a miserable garret and a crust of bread, and would have perished from want, had not some friends, neither wealthy nor powerful, averted this disgrace from coming upon our country. One of these gentlemen, Mr. Linnel, employed Blake to engrave his Inventions of the Book of Job; by this he earned money enough to keep him living—for the good old man still laboured with all the ardour of the days of his youth, and with skill equal to his enthusiasm. These engravings are very rare, very beautiful, and very peculiar. They are in the earlier fashion of workmanship, and bear no resemblance whatever to the polished and graceful style which now prevails. I have never seen a tinted copy, nor am I sure that tinting would accord with the extreme simplicity of the designs, and the mode in which they are handled. The Songs of Innocence, and these Inventions for Job, are the happiest of Blake's works, and ought to be in the portfolios of all who are lovers of nature and imagination.

Two extensive works, bearing the ominous names of Prophecies, one concerning America, the other Europe, next made their appearance from his pencil and graver. The first contains eighteen, and the other seventeen plates, and both are plen-

tifully seasoned with verse, without the incumbrance of rhyme. It is impossible to give a satisfactory description of these works; the frontispiece of the latter, representing the Ancient of Days, in an orb of light, stooping into chaos, to measure out the world, has been admired less for its meaning than for the grandeur of its outline. A head and a tail-piece in the other have been much noticed—one exhibits the bottom of the sea, with enormous fishes preying on a dead body—the other, the surface, with a dead body floating, on which an eagle with outstretched wings is feeding. The two angels pouring out the spotted plague upon Britain—an angel standing in the sun, attended by three furies—and several other Inventions in these wild works, exhibit wonderful strength of drawing and splendour of colouring. Of loose prints—but which were meant doubtless to form part of some extensive work—one of the most remarkable is the Great Sea Serpent; and a figure, sinking in a stormy sea at sunset—the glow of which, with the foam upon the dark waves, produces a magical effect.

After a residence of seventeen years in South Molton Street, Blake removed (not in consequence, alas! of any increase of fortune,) to No. 3, Fountain Court, Strand. This was in the year 1823. Here he engraved by day and saw visions by night, and occasionally employed himself in making Inventions for Dante; and such was his application that he designed in all one hundred and two, and engraved seven. It was publicly known that he was in a declining state of health; that old age had come upon him, and that he was in want. Several

friends, and artists among the number, aided him a little, in a delicate way, by purchasing his works, of which he had many copies. He sold many of his "Songs of Innocence," and also of "Urizen," and he wrought incessantly upon what he counted his masterpiece, the "Jerusalem," tinting and adorning it, with the hope that his favourite would find a purchaser. No one, however, was found ready to lay out twenty-five guineas on a work which no one could have any hope of comprehending, and this disappointment sank to the old man's heart.

He had now reached his seventy-first year, and the strength of nature was fast yielding. Yet he was to the last cheerful and contented. "I glory," he said, "in dying, and have no grief but in leaving you, Katherine; we have lived happy, and we have lived long; we have been ever together, but we shall be divided soon. Why should I fear death? Nor do I fear it. I have endeavoured to live as Christ commands, and have sought to worship God truly—in my own house, when I was not seen of men." He grew weaker and weaker—he could no longer sit upright; and was laid in his bed, with no one to watch over him, save his wife, who, feeble and old herself, required help in such a touching duty.

The Ancient of Days was such a favourite with Blake, that three days before his death, he sat bolstered up in bed, and tinted it with his choicest colours and in his happiest style. He touched and retouched it—held it at arm's length, and then threw it from him, exclaiming, "There! that will do! I cannot mend it." He saw his wife in tears

—she felt this was to be the last of his works—“Stay, Kate! (cried Blake) keep just as you are—I will draw your portrait—for you have ever been an angel to me”—she obeyed, and the dying artist made a fine likeness.

The very joyfulness with which this singular man welcomed the coming of death, made his dying moments intensely mournful. He lay chanting songs, and the verses and the music were both the offspring of the moment. He lamented that he could no longer commit those inspirations, as he called them, to paper “Kate,” he said, “I am a changing man—I always rose and wrote down my thoughts, whether it rained, snowed, or shone, and you arose too and sat beside me—this can be no longer.” He died on the 12th of August, 1828, without any visible pain—his wife, who sat watching him, did not perceive when he ceased breathing.

William Blake was of low stature and slender make, with a high pallid forehead, and eyes large, dark, and expressive. His temper was touchy, and when moved, he spoke with an indignant eloquence, which commanded respect. His voice, in general, was low and musical, his manners gentle and unassuming, his conversation a singular mixture of knowledge and enthusiasm. His whole life was one of labour and privation,—he had never tasted the luxury of that independence, which comes from professional profit. This untoward fortune he endured with unshaken equanimity—offering himself, in imagination, as a martyr in the great cause of poetic art;—*pitying* some of his more fortunate brethren for their inordinate love of gain; and not doubting

that whatever he might have won in gold by adopting other methods, would have been a poor compensation for the ultimate loss of fame. Under this agreeable delusion, he lived all his life—he was satisfied when his graver gained him a guinea a week—the greater the present denial, the surer the glory hereafter.

Though he was the companion of Flaxman and Fuseli, and sometimes their pupil, he never attained that professional skill, without which all genius is bestowed in vain. He was his own teacher chiefly; and self-instruction, the parent occasionally of great beauties, seldom fails to produce great deformities. He was a most splendid tinter, but no colourist, and his works were all of small dimensions, and therefore confined to the cabinet and the portfolio. His happiest flights, as well as his wildest, are thus likely to remain shut up from the world. If we look at the man through his best and most intelligible works, we shall find that he who could produce the Songs of Innocence and Experience, the Gates of Paradise, and the Inventions for Job, was the possessor of very lofty faculties, with no common skill in art, and moreover that, both in thought and mode of treatment, he was a decided original. But should we, shutting our eyes to the merits of those works, determine to weigh his worth by his Urizen, his Prophecies of Europe and America, and his Jerusalem, our conclusion would be very unfavourable; we would say that, with much freedom of composition and boldness of posture, he was unmeaning, mystical, and extravagant, and that his original mode of working out his conceptions was little better than

a brilliant way of animating absurdity. An overflow of imagination is a failing uncommon in this age, and has generally received of late little quarter from the critical portion of mankind. Yet imagination is the life and spirit of all great works of genius and taste ; and, indeed, without it, the head thinks and the hand labours in vain. Ten thousand authors and artists rise to the proper, the graceful, and the beautiful, for ten who ascend into “the heaven of invention.” A work—whether from poet or painter—conceived in the fiery ecstasy of imagination, lives through every limb; while one elaborated out by skill and taste only will look, in comparison, like a withered and sapless tree beside one green and flourishing. Blake’s misfortune was that of possessing this precious gift in excess. His fancy overmastered him—until he at length confounded “the mind’s eye” with the corporeal organ, and dreamed himself out of the sympathies of actual life.

His method of colouring was a secret which he kept to himself, or confided only to his wife ; he believed that it was revealed in a vision, and that he was bound in honour to conceal it from the world. “His modes of preparing his grounds,” says Smith, in his Supplement to the Life of Nollekens, “and laying them over his panels for printing, mixing his colours, and manner of working, were those which he considered to have been practised by the early fresco painters, whose productions still remain in many instances vividly and permanently fresh. His ground was a mixture of whiting and carpenters’ glue, which he passed over several times in the coatings ; his colours he ground

himself, and also united with them the same sort of glue, but in a much weaker state. He would, in the course of painting a picture, pass a very thin transparent wash of glue-water over the whole of the parts he had worked upon, and then proceed with his finishing. He had many secret modes of working, both as a colourist and an engraver. His method of eating away the plain copper, and leaving the lines of his subjects and his words as stereotype, is, in my mind, perfectly original. Mrs. Blake is in possession of the secret, and she ought to receive something considerable for its communication, as I am quite certain it may be used to advantage, both to artists and literary characters in general." The affection and fortitude of this woman entitle her to much respect. She shared her husband's lot without a murmur, set her heart solely upon his fame, and soothed him in those hours of misgiving and despondency which are not unknown to the strongest intellects. She still lives to lament the loss of Blake—and *feel* it.

Of Blake's merits as a poet I have already spoken—but something more may be said—for there is a simplicity and a pathos in many of his snatches of verse worthy of the olden muse. On all his works there is an impress of poetic thought, and what is still better a gentle humanity and charitable feeling towards the meanest work of God, such as few bards have indulged in. On the orphan children going to church on Holy Thursday, the following touching verses were composed—they are inserted between the procession of girls and the procession of boys in one of his singular engravings.

“ ‘Twas on a Holy Thursday,  
    their innocent faces clean,  
The children walked forth two and two,  
    in red, and blue, and green ;  
Grey-headed beadles walked before  
    with wands as white as snow,  
Into the high dome of St. Paul’s,  
    like Thames’ waves they flow.  
O, what a multitude they seemed !  
    these flowers of London town,  
Seated in company they sit,  
    with radiance all their own.  
The hum of multitudes was there,  
    but multitudes of lambs,  
Thousands of little boys and girls  
    raising their innocent hands.  
How, like a mighty wind, they raise  
    to heaven the voice of song,  
Or like harmonious thunderings,  
    the seats of heaven among.  
Beneath them sit the aged men,  
    wise guardians of the poor,  
Then cherish pity, lest you drive  
    an angel from your door.”

Under the influence of gayer feelings, he wrote what he called the Laughing Song—his pencil drew young men and maidens merry round a table, and a youth, with a plumed cap in one hand and a wine-cup in the other, chaunts these gladsome verses.

“ When the green woods laugh with the voice of joy,  
And the dimpling stream runs laughing by ;  
When the air does laugh with our merry wit,  
And the green hill laughs with the noise of it.

When the meadows laugh with lively green,  
 And the grasshopper laughs in the merry scene;  
 When Mary, and Susan, and Emily,  
 With their sweet round mouths sing ha! ha! he!

When the painted birds laugh in the shade,  
 Where our table with cherries and nuts is spread;  
 Come live and be merry, and join with me,  
 To sing the sweet chorus of ha! ha! he!"

In the Song of the Lamb, there is a simplicity which seems easily attained till it is tried, and a religious tenderness of sentiment in perfect keeping with the poetry. A naked child is pencilled standing beside a group of lambs, and these verses are written underneath.

" Little lamb, who made thee?  
 Little lamb, who made thee?  
 Gave thee life, and bade thee feed,  
 By the stream and o'er the mead;  
 Gave thee clothing of delight,  
 Softest clothing—woolly bright;  
 Gave thee such a tender voice,  
 Making all the vales rejoice?  
 Little lamb, who made thee?  
 Dost thou know who made thee?  
 Little lamb, I'll tell thee;  
 Little lamb, I'll tell thee;  
 He is called by thy name,  
 For he calls himself a lamb;  
 He is meek, and he is mild,  
 He became a little child;  
 I a child, and thou a lamb,  
 We are called by his name.  
 Little lamb, God bless thee;  
 Little lamb, God bless thee."

It would be unjust to the memory of the painter and poet to omit a song which he composed in honour of that wife who repaid with such sincere affection the regard which he had for her. It has other merits.

“ I love the jocund dance,  
The softly breathing song,  
Where innocent eyes do glance,  
And lisps the maiden’s tongue.

I love the laughing vale,  
I love the echoing hill,  
Where mirth is never mute,  
And jolly lads laugh their fill.

I love the pleasant cot,  
I love the innocent bower,  
Where brown bread is our lot,  
And fruit at the mid-day hour.

I love the oaken seat,  
Beneath the oaken tree,  
Where all the old villagers meet,  
And laugh our sports to see.

I love our neighbours all,  
But, Kate, I most love thee,  
And love thee I ever shall,  
For thou art all to me.”

Images of a sterner nature than those of domestic love were, however, at all times, familiar to his fancy; I have shown him softened down to the mood of babes and sucklings; I shall exhibit him in a more martial temper. In a ballad, which he calls Gwinn, King of Norway, there are many

vigorous verses—the fierce Norwegian has invaded England with all his eager warriors.

“ Like reared stones around a grave  
They stand around their king.”

But the intrepid islanders are nothing dismayed ; they gather to the charge ; these are the words of Blake forty-six years ago ;—and this man’s poetry obtained no notice, while Darwin and Hayley were gorged with adulation.

“ The husbandman now leaves his plough,  
To wade through fields of gore,  
The merchant binds his brows in steel,  
And leaves the trading shore.

The shepherd leaves his mellow pipe,  
And sounds the trumpet shrill,  
The workman throws his hammer down,  
To heave the bloody bill.

Like the tall ghost of Barraton,  
Who sports in stormy sky,  
Gwinn leads his host, as black as night  
When pestilence doth fly.

With horses and with chariots,  
There all his spearmen bold  
March to the sound of mournful song,  
Like clouds around him rolled.

The armies stand like balances  
Held in the Almighty’s hand,  
Gwinn, thou hast filled thy measure up,  
Thou’rt swept from English land.

Earth smokes with blood, and groans and shakes  
To drink her children’s gore,  
A sea of blood ! nor can the eye  
See to the trembling shore.

And on the verge of this wild sea  
Famine and Death do cry,  
The shrieks of women and of babes  
Around the field do fly."

As Blake united poetry and painting in all his compositions, I have endeavoured to show that his claims to the distinction of a poet were not slight. He wrought much and slept little, and has left volumes of verse, amounting, it is said, to nearly an hundred, prepared for the press. If they are as wild and mystical as the poetry of his Urizen, they are as well in manuscript—if they are as natural and touching as many of his songs of Innocence, a judicious selection might be safely published.

---

---



## JOHN OPIE

was born in the parish of St. Agnes, about seven miles from the town of Truro in Cornwall, in 1761. His father and grandfather were carpenters, and wrote their names Oppy ; his mother was descended from the ancient family of Tonkin, in the same district, but whose chief claim to distinction arises from a county history, which one of her relatives wrote, and which remains unfinished, as well as unpublished, in the hands of Lord De Dunstanville. Of his mother's claim to high provincial descent he was either ignorant or disdainful ; for his widow—a name of some note in literature—confesses that she was made acquainted with it for the first time by a brief sketch of his character, published after his death by Mr. Prince Hoare.

He appears to have been regarded amongst his rustic companions as a kind of parochial wonder from his early years. At the age of twelve he had mastered Euclid, and was considered so skilful in arithmetic and penmanship, that he commenced an evening school for the instruction of the peasants of the parish of St. Agnes. His father—a blunt mechanic—seems to have misunderstood all these indications of mental superiority, and wished him to leave the pen for the plane and the saw ; and it would appear that his paternal de-

sires were for some time obeyed, for John accompanied, at least, his father to his work: but this was when he was very young, and it seems probable that he disliked the business, since his father had to chastise him for making ludicrous drawings with red chalk on the deals which were planed up for use.

His love of art came upon him early. When he was ten years old he saw Mark Oates—an elder companion, and now a Captain of Marines—draw a butterfly; he looked anxiously on, and exclaimed, “I think I can draw a butterfly as well as Mark Oates:” he took a pencil, tried, succeeded, and ran breathless home to tell his mother what he had done. Soon afterwards he saw a picture of a farm-yard in a house in Truro where his father was at work; he looked and looked—went away—returned again and looked—and seemed unwilling to be out of sight of this prodigy. For this forwardness his father—whose hand seems to have been ever ready in that way—gave him a sharp chastisement; but the lady of the house interposed, and indulged the boy with another look. On returning home he procured cloth and colours, and made a tolerable copy of the painting from memory alone. He likewise attempted original delineation from life; and, by degrees, hung the humble dwelling round with likenesses of his relatives and companions, much to the pleasure of his uncle, a man with sense and knowledge above his condition, but greatly to the vexation of his father, who could not comprehend the merit of such an idle trade.

## Of the early days of

“The Cornish Boy in tin mines bred,”

as Wolcot describes him, we have various and conflicting accounts. The Secretary for Foreign Correspondence in the Royal Academy says, that he followed his studies in art with much ardour, and that his sketches attracted the notice of Wolcot, (Peter Pindar,) then residing as a physician in Truro, whose knowledge in painting and sound judgment were of great advantage to the young scholar. A rougher man tells a ruder story. “Dr. Wolcot,” says Smith, “compassionately took him as a lad to clean knives, feed the dog, &c. purposely to screen him from the beating his father would now and then give him for chalking the sawpit all over. Oppy—for so we must for the present call him—always staid a long time when he went to the slaughterhouse for paunches for the dog: at last the Doctor was so wonderfully pleased by John’s bringing him home an astonishing likeness of his friend the carcass butcher, that he condescended to sit to him, and the production was equally surprising.” Some such story as this was related by Wolcot himself, in his half grave and half humorous way, at the period when the subject of this memoir was high in fame; but as his purpose was to rebuke the pride of the successful artist, his account must be received with some caution. It is certain, however, that our painter lived whilst a boy as a menial in the satirist’s family, and gained his good-will by his talents.

How long he remained with Wolcot has not

been mentioned. When yet very young, we find him commenced portrait-painter by profession, and wandering from town to town in quest of employment. "One of these expeditions," says Prince Hoare, "was to Padstow, whither he set forward, dressed as usual in a boy's plain short jacket, and carrying with him all proper apparatus for portrait-painting. Here, amongst others, he painted the whole household of the ancient and respectable family of *Prideaux*, even to the dogs and cats of the family. He remained so long absent from home, that some uneasiness began to arise on his account, but it was dissipated by his returning dressed in a handsome coat, with very long skirts, laced ruffles, and silk stockings. On seeing his mother he ran to her, and taking out of his pocket twenty guineas which he had earned by his pencil, he desired her to keep them: adding, that in future he should maintain himself."

For his mother he always entertained the deepest affection—and neither age, nor the pressure of worldly business diminished his enthusiasm in the least. He loved to speak of the mildness of her nature and the tenderness of her heart—of her love of truth and her maternal circumspection. He delighted to recall her epithets of fondness, and relate how she watched over him when a boy, and warmed his gloves and great coat in the winter mornings on his departure for school. This good woman lived to the age of ninety-two, enjoyed the fame of her son, and was gladdened with his bounty.

Of those early efforts good judges have spoken with much approbation;—they were deficient in

grace, but true to nature, and remarkable for their fidelity of resemblance. He painted with small pencils, and finished more highly than when his hand had attained more mastery. Lord Bateman was one of his earliest patrons, and employed him to paint old men and travelling mendicants: sitters such as those neither alarmed the rustic artist with their dignity, nor annoyed him with their remarks —they sat in silent wonder, and beheld the second creation of their persons—then rose and thought him a wondrous lad. By this practice his hand attained that ready and dashing freedom of manner, which was so much his friend when more fastidious heads came to his easel. His usual price, when he was sixteen years of age, was seven shillings and sixpence for a portrait. But of all the works which he painted in those probationary days, that which won the admiration of the good people of Truro most was a parrot walking down his perch: all the living parrots that saw it acknowledged the resemblance. So much was he charmed with his pursuit and his prospects, that when Wolcot asked him how he liked painting,—“ Better,” he answered, “ than bread and meat.”

In the twentieth year of his age our limner formed the resolution of visiting London, and set out for the great city under the protection of Wolcot. It is said, that the poet and the painter held a consultation upon the rustic sound of Oppy, and both uniting in opinion that it was vulgar and unmusical, changed it to Opie—a name owned by an old Cornish family. The alteration was immaterial, for they are both evidently the same name: but under all the external advantages which Opie could

claim over Oppy, he was presented to Sir Joshua Reynolds. He had not as yet determined on having himself announced, in the blazonry of prose and verse, as the "Wonderful Cornishman," on whom nature had spontaneously, without study, dropt down the gifts of art: the President received him courteously, gave him some advice, and desired to see him again. He evidently did not consider this new marvel at all marvellous.

To rise, by silent and slow degrees, to fame, suited ill with the rustic impatience of Opie, and worse with the vanity of Wolcot, who desired to amaze the town by proclaiming a prodigy. Peter Pindar was right for once. Nothing is more capricious than public taste: its huge appetite for wonders requires daily food; and it swallows all with the ravenous avidity with which the giant gulped the wine of Ulysses, and cried, with his half-breathless voice, "More!—Give me more!—This is divine!" Even if the candidate for its fickle approbation wants original genius to carry him triumphantly onwards, he may, nevertheless, have address enough to secure a fortune before his deficiency is discovered—or the huzza rises on the appearance of another new wonder. All this was present to the mind of the sagacious satirist: he took his measures accordingly, and the wealthy and titled hordes, who professed taste and virtù, and were absolute in art and literature, came swarming out to behold "the Cornish Wonder"—for as such the patron announced the painter.

Of the success of this manœuvre Northcote gives this graphic account:—"The novelty and

originality of manner in his pictures, added to his great abilities, drew an universal attention from the connoisseurs, and he was immediately surrounded and employed by all the principal nobility of England. When he ceased, and that was soon, to be a novelty, the capricious public left him in disgust. They now looked out for his defects alone—and he became, in his turn, totally neglected and forgotten; and, instead of being the sole object of public attention, and having the street where he lived so crowded with coaches of the nobility as to become a real nuisance to the neighbourhood, ‘so,’ as he jestingly observed to me, ‘that he thought he must place cannon at the door to keep the multitude off from it,’ he now found himself as entirely deserted as if his house had been infected with the plague. Such is the world!” His popularity was not, however, so very brief as this description would induce us to infer. Some time elapsed before he executed his commissions. When the wonder of the town began to abate, the country came gaping in; and ere he wearied both, he had augmented the original thirty guineas with which he commenced the adventure, to a very comfortable sum; had furnished a house in Orange Court, Leicester Fields; and was every way in a condition to bid immediate want defiance.

The first use which he made of his success was to spread comfort around his mother; and then he proceeded with his works and his studies like one resolved to deserve the distinction which he had obtained. His own strong natural sense, and powers of observation, enabled him to lift the veil

which the ignorant admiration of the multitude had thrown over his defects : he saw where he was weak—and laboured most diligently to improve himself. His progress was great—and visible to all, save the leaders of taste and fashion. When his works were crude and unstudied, their applause was deafening ; when they were such as really merited a place in public galleries, the world, resolved not to be infatuated twice with the same object, paid him a cold, or at least a very moderate, attention. “ Reynolds,” says Wilton the sculptor, “ is the only eminent painter who has been able to charm back the public to himself after they were tired of him.” The somewhat rough and unaccommodating manners of Opie, were in his way to fortune : it requires delicate feet to tread the path of portraiture ; and we must remember that he was a peasant unacquainted with the elegance of learning, and unpolished by intercourse with the courtesies and amenities of polite life. Of this he could learn little in his father’s cottage : and Wolcot, whose skill lay in coarse satiric verse, in boisterous humour, and in profane swearing, could be but an indifferent instructor. He was thrown into the drawing-room, rough and rude as he came from the hills of Cornwall, and had to acquit himself as well as he could.

I can hardly believe all that has been said as to that fear of heart and fever of spirit which were upon Opie when he found himself fanned for the first time with duchesses’ plumes, and enclosed in a glittering circle of garters and stars. A weak man might have been bewildered, and a very vain man too much elated—but he was neither weak

nor vain; and it is apparent that he made no efforts to accommodate himself to the atmosphere which he has been described as breathing with such superfluity of respect.

Indeed he appears to have been a plain bold man, with a moderate share of sensitiveness. "His habitual ruggedness of address," observes Mrs. Inchbald, "was stigmatized by the courtly observer with the appellation of ill-breeding, whilst a plainer and wiser description of persons found in this contempt of affectation such a security from design—either upon their hearts or their understandings—that they willingly yielded him both; and they made this sacrifice with a kind of joyful astonishment to observe that where the Graces never appeared, the Virtues acted for them." This natural blemish in the man—this habitual ruggedness of manner—appeared to Northcote only the effect of an honest indignation towards that which he conceived to be error. It however made its appearance early in life, and seems to have been inherited from his father, who, according to all accounts, was coarse and unaccommodating. "One Sunday afternoon, while his mother was at church, Mr. Opie, then a boy of ten or eleven years old, fixed his materials for painting in a little kitchen, directly opposite the parlour where his father sat reading the Bible. He went on drawing till he had finished every thing but the head, and when he came to that, he frequently ran into the parlour to look up in his father's face. He repeated this extraordinary interruption so often, that the old man became quite angry, and threatened to correct him severely if he did the like again. This was

exactly what the young artist wanted. He wished to paint his father's eyes when lighted up and sparkling with indignation ; and having obtained his end, he quietly resumed his task. He had completed his picture before his mother's return from church, and on her entering the house, he set it before her. She knew it instantly ; but, ever true to her principles, she was very angry with him for having painted on a Sunday, thereby profaning the Sabbath-day. The child, however, was so elated by his success, that he disregarded her remonstrance, and hanging fondly round her neck, he was alive only to the pleasure she had given him, by owning the strength of the resemblance. At this moment his father entered the room, and recognising his own portrait, immediately highly approved of his son's amusement during the afternoon, and exhibited the picture with ever-new satisfaction to all who came to the house ; while the story of his anger at interruptions, so happily excused and accounted for, added interest to his narrative, and gratified still more the pride of the artist."

I would fain disbelieve this story ; but it comes too well authenticated to be omitted in a narrative whose object is truth. To think of a child deliberately putting its father in a passion that it might copy the sparkling indignation of his eyes ! and a wife, and a loving one, recording the trick of this sucking incendiary as a thing pleasant and meritorious ! The rod must, after all, have been a necessary piece of furniture in the household of the carpenter of St. Agnes !

Opie, having conquered the chief difficulties

of his profession, and acquired a knowledge of French, and a smattering of Latin, now found leisure to become sensible of a want which London could easily supply. It is reported that love of money first directed his eyes to the daughter of a pawnbroker who lived in his neighbourhood. Neither his courtship nor his marriage have been alluded to by his biographers; the first was short, and the second unhappy. His wife, a little woman with very dark eyes, and a handsome portion, had a mind of her own as well as the artist; and, loving gaiety, was not disposed to shut herself up from sun and air with a man of a morose turn, whose whole time was dedicated to the study of the dark masters. It is said that a kind word, and an affectionate shake by the hand, banished from his mind in general the remembrance of any wrong committed against him; and that such was his placability of nature, that he was willing to confide again in those who unworthily betrayed him. His wife, a childless and giddy woman, soon put his charity to the extreme proof; and he was compelled to sue for a divorce.

That domestic sorrow such as this had a serious influence upon his temper and his studies, who can doubt? but those who have drawn his character and delineated his life, avoid any allusion to his frail partner; they had knowledge and declined to use it—they were over-sensitive, and have not done justice to the memory of Opie by this omission. The only allusion to the circumstance is contained in one of the painter's own smart sayings. He was passing the church of St. Giles late one evening, in the company of a friend

of avowed sceptical opinions. "I was *married* at that church," observed Opie. "And I was *christened* there," said his companion. "Indeed!" answered the painter, "it seems they make unsure work at that church, for it neither holds in wedlock nor in baptism!"

Having freed himself from the encumbrance of an unfaithful wife, and got rid of the crowds of carriages which filled up the street, and annoyed his neighbours, he divided his time between his profession and the cultivation of his mind. He was conscious of his defective education; and, like Reynolds, desired to repair it, by mingling in the company of men of learning and talent, and by the careful perusal of the noblest writers. "Such," says his best biographer, "were the powers of his memory, that he remembered all he had read: and Milton, Shakespeare, Dryden, Pope, Gray, Cowper, Butler, Burke, and Dr. Johnson, he might, to use a familiar expression, be said to know by heart." A man of powerful understanding and ready apprehension, who "remembered all he read," and who had nine of the greatest and most voluminous of our authors by heart, could never be at any loss in company, if he had tolerable skill in using his stores.

To his intellectual vigour we have strong testimony. "Mr. Opie crowds more wisdom," said Horne Tooke, "into a few words, than almost any man I ever knew—he speaks as it were in axioms—and what he observes, is worthy to be remembered." "Had Mr. Opie turned his powers of mind," says Sir James Mackintosh, "to the study of philosophy, he would have been one of the first

philosophers of the age. I was never more struck than with his original manner of thinking and expressing himself in conversation ; and had he written on the subject, he would, perhaps, have thrown more light on the philosophy of his art than any man living." "He aimed at no competition with the learned," says Amelia Opie, "while with a manly simplicity, which neither feared contempt nor courted applause, he has often, even in such company, made observations originating in the native treasures of his own mind, which learning could not teach, and which learning alone could not enable its possessor to appreciate."

At the period of his first appearance there was considerable encouragement for works of an historic nature ; West, Barry, Fuseli, and, occasionally, Reynolds, produced such—with more or less of success and applause. That this high feeling has now greatly subsided in England, there can be little doubt ; even during the lifetime of Opie, commissions, as they are called, for such pictures, were becoming more and more rare ; and now alas !—it is sufficient to mention two of the more striking instances—the "Satan" of Lawrence, and the "Fall of Nineveh" of Martin, remain in their studies. Opie, anxious for fame, and yet resolved to live, did well then in dividing his pencil between portraiture and history.

His chief excellence lies in the former ; there he has great breadth, vigour, and natural force of character—touched, it must be allowed, in some instances, with a certain air of village audacity, which comes from the artist rather than from the sitter. His old men's heads—half fancy and half

portrait, are deficient in carefulness of finish; but this is more than compensated by that rough and happy energy with which they are dashed out. They furnish no comparisons—such as critics love to make—with the works of Velasquez, or Vandyke, or Reynolds; they have a better claim to distinction—they are truly original productions. His portrait of Charles Fox has been justly commended, nor does the circumstance of his having completed the likeness from the bust by Nollekens, as related by Smith, diminish his merit. When Fox, who sat opposite to Opie at the Academy dinner given in the exhibition room, heard the general applause which his portrait obtained, he remembered that he had given him less of his time than the painter had requested, and said across the table, “there Mr. Opie, you see I was right; every body thinks it could not be better. Now if I had minded you and consented to sit again, you most probably would have spoiled the picture.” While this far-famed portrait was in progress, Opie became alarmed for his success: he was distracted by a multitude of hints, which friends who came in swarms dropped, regarding the expression, the posture, and the handling. Fox was amused with the variety of opinions, and kindly whispered to Opie, “don’t mind what these people say—you must know better than they do.”

The ladies who sat for their portraits he found more difficult to deal with, than the great leader of the Whigs. There was at first a want of grace and softness in his female heads—he felt this early, and laboured to amend it—but it is said, that he did not wholly succeed till his second marriage.

"Opie," said one of his brethren, when he exhibited some female portraits soon after that event, "we never saw anything like this in you before—this must be owing to your wife :" and it is likely that the compliment, though paid perhaps in jest, was nevertheless just. The habitual ruggedness of his personal manners yielded to the winning and graceful tact of Amelia Opie, and it is easy to believe that her presence might have the same influence upon his pencil. The words in which she vindicates her husband from the charge of speaking his mind coarsely, and a desire to appear a grand natural character, are well worth transcribing.

"Of all employments portrait painting is perhaps the most painful and trying to a man of pride and sensibility, and the most irritating to an irritable man. To hear beauties and merits in a portrait often stigmatized as deformities and blemishes—to have high lights taken for white spots, and dark effective shadows for the dirty appearance of a snuff-taker :—to witness discontent in the bystanders, because the painting does not exhibit the sweet smile of the sitter, though it is certain that a smile on canvass looks like the grin of idiocy ; while a laughing eye, if the artist attempts to copy it, as unavoidably assumes the disgusting resemblance of progressive intoxication. Sitters themselves, Mr. Opie rarely found troublesome ; but *persons of worship*, as he called them, that is, persons of great consequence, either from talent, rank, or widely spreading connexions, are sometimes attended by others, whose aim is to endeavour to please the great man or woman by flattery wholly at the expense of the poor artist ; and to minister

sweet food to the palate of the patron, regardless though it be wormwood to that of the painter. Hence arises an eulogy on the beauties and perfections of the person painted, and regrets that they are so inadequately rendered by the person painting ; while frivolous objection succeeds to frivolous objection, and impossibilities are expected and required as if they were possibilities. I have too frequently witnessed this, and *my* temper and patience have often been on the point of deserting me, even when Mr. Opie's had not apparently undergone the slightest alteration—a strong proof that he possessed some of that self-command which is one of the requisites of good breeding."

He experienced no such difficulties in his historical compositions—the heroes or the beauties of other days had no friends to be fastidious about their merry eyes or their smiling lips, and he could exchange dark ringlets for tresses of gold, and distribute glowing complexions, according to his own will and pleasure. He had, however, an equally painful battle to sustain with the men of taste and virtù, whose heads were crammed with the remembrance of the principal works of the great masters of Italy—men who had ridden post-haste through the continent, and returned with the incurable belief that every thing old was excellent —every thing new poor and degenerate. Originality was looked upon as something strange and outré—to trust to the strength of nature was weakness—to work so that the spirit and effect could be justified by reference to Rembrandt or Raphael, was to possess true taste, and to be embued with the spirit of the great masters. Opie,

it must be admitted, wanted poetic power to enable him to rise to the first eminence as an historical painter—but he had a sense of propriety of action and vigour of character which these connoisseurs wanted nerve to feel, and which have stamped no light value on many of his historical productions.

Those which have caught public fancy most are the Murder of James the First, of Scotland; the Presentation in the Temple; Jephthah's Vow; the Death of David Rizzio; Young Arthur taken Prisoner; Arthur with Hubert; Belisarius; Juliet in the Garden; and the Escape of Gil Blas and Munsidora. Many others might be named, and many more praised; for he conceived without much delay, and executed with great readiness. He had no air-drawn visions of beauty before him which his pencil loved to follow; he sketched in his group, sought living nature to help him out with what was not in his mind's eye, and, bending his subject to his model rather than elevating the model to suit the subject, enslaved himself to the literal flesh and blood which he copied. "He painted what he saw," says West, "in the most masterly manner, and he varied little from it. He saw nature in one point more distinctly and forcibly than any painter that ever lived. The truth of colour, as conveyed to the eye through the atmosphere, by which the distance of every object is ascertained, was never better expressed than by him. He distinctly represented local colour in all its various tones and proportions, whether in light or in shadow, with a perfect uniformity of imitation. Other painters frequently make two separate colours of objects in light and in shade,—Opie never. With him no colour—

whether white, black, primary or compound—ever, in any situation, lost its respective hue."

His works were not the offspring of random fits of labour, after long indulgence in idleness ; they were the well-considered progeny of his mind and hand—the fruit of daily toil, in which every hour had its allotted task. He sketched out a plan of weekly study, from which pleasure or persuasion seldom wiled him. "He was always in his painting-room," says Amelia Opie, "by half-past eight in winter, and by eight o'clock in summer; and there he generally remained, closely engaged in painting, till half-past four in winter, and till five in summer. Nor did he ever allow himself to be idle when he had no pictures bespoken ; and as he never let his execution rust for want of practice, he, in that case, either sketched out designs for historical or fancy pictures, or endeavoured, by working on an unfinished picture of me, to improve himself by incessant practice in that difficult branch of art, female portraiture. Neither did he suffer his exertions to be paralysed by neglect the most unexpected, and disappointment the most undeserved."

The world looks only at the brilliant result of an artist's labour. We see a magnificent work, filled with divine shapes and glowing with the freshest hues of heaven and earth, and the idea never darkens in our fancy that he who created this prodigy is in dread of want, and perhaps even now knows not how he is to be fed to-morrow. "Though he had a picture in the Exhibition of 1801, which was universally admired, and purchased as soon as beheld"—I quote once more the

words of his widow—" he saw himself at the end of that year and the beginning of the next almost wholly without employment; and even my sanguine temper, yielding to the trial, I began to fear that, small as our expenditure was, it must become still smaller. Not that I allowed myself to own that I desponded; on the contrary, I was forced to talk to him of hopes and to bid him look forward to brighter prospects, as his temper, naturally desponding, required all the support imaginable. But gloomy and painful indeed were those three alarming months; and I consider them as the severest trial I experienced during my married life. Even despondence did not make him indolent; he continued to paint regularly as usual, and, no doubt, by that means increased his ability to do justice to the torrent of business which soon afterwards set in towards him, and never ceased to flow till the day of his death."

There is no doubt that Opie incurred a debt of gratitude to Wolcot for his frank and friendly encouragement, when he was a menial in his house in Cornwall, and for his anxious introduction of "the Cornish Wonder" to the novelty-gazers of London. The poet often complained that the painter was ungrateful. He probably expected that when Opie had earned fame and name, he should still consider himself under the shadow of his patronage. I know not enough of the private history of the artist to decide, with certainty and exactness, in how far he was blameable for the coldness which took place between them, and anticipated the grave. The doctor was an odd and capricious man, who loved swearing better than satire, and united them both.

frequently to the injury of his best friends: it was no wonder therefore that Opie should shrink from his society, more especially if he still retained the airs of the master. Officious go-betweens carried to the artist the last satiric thing which the poet had uttered concerning him, and then returned to the satirist with the morose and surly observations of Opie. “What ails Wolcot at you?” said one of those persons—“once I thought he had been a friendly and kind-hearted man?” “Aye, aye,” answered Opie—“in time you will know him.” When the painter’s works happened to be praised in Wolcot’s presence, he always coupled very dexterously the present time with the past, and formed a back-ground to his fame with the humility and darkness of his early life. With him who gave the first cause of offence the odium of this estrangement must abide, and I have, I own, some fears that it appertains to Opie.

For the loss of this early friend, the infidelity of his wife, and the fickleness of popular opinion, he sought a wise remedy—a woman worthy of his affection, who could soothe him in periods of depression, and, by her good sense and clear understanding, aid him in all his undertakings. He was thirty-seven years old, and that youthful fever which all feel was past and gone; he could now choose discreetly. The merits of the lady are widely known—not through the genius of her husband, but her own; and all who have read her works must feel that she was worthy of wearing the name of Opie. To her pen we owe the little that has been publicly told concerning the private life and modes of study of her husband; and

though we wish to know him more familiarly, we are not insensible to the delicacy of the task which she undertook. What other colours, save those that are rich and bright, could a wife use in drawing her husband's character? She expected, indeed, that an ampler memoir would be written by a bolder, and perhaps colder, hand; and might desire to leave to this biographer the ungentle task of adding the ruder touches and the darker shades. This has not been done; from the garland which she hung over his hearse, I must take a few more flowers. I shall endeavour to do this with a respectful hand.

Opie was no impatient labourer for wealth, who desired to snatch his gains before his colours were dry on the canvass: he studied much, wrought incessantly, and was ill to please. "During the nine years that I was his wife, (says Mrs. Opie,) I never saw him satisfied with any one of his productions; and often, very often, have I seen him enter my sitting-room, and, throwing himself in an agony of despondence on the sofa, exclaim, 'I am the most stupid of created beings, and I never, never shall be a painter as long as I live.' He used to study at Somerset House, when the pictures were hung up, with more persevering attention and thirst for improvement than was ever exhibited perhaps by the lowest student in the schools, and on his return I never heard him expatiate on his own excellencies, but sorrowfully dwell on his own defects; while he often expressed to me his envy of certain powers in art which other painters were masters of, and which he feared he should never be able to obtain."

Thus quick to censure his own works, our painter was slow to commend those of his brethren. There is indeed a singular tardiness amongst artists in either praising or blaming one another : they seem to think that the whole world is waiting for their opinion, and that commendation will raise a brother above his level, and censure sink him below it. They deal out dark and diplomatic responses respecting each other's merits, and leave you to interpret their meaning. "Opie," says his wife, "was free from vanity—more particularly from that vanity which induces a man to believe that his wisdom is great. He was so slow to commend, and panegyric on the works of contemporary artists was so sparingly given by him, that it was natural for some persons to suppose him actuated by the feelings of professional jealousy ; but it was more generous, and I am fully convinced more *just*, to think this sluggishness to praise was merely the result of such a *high idea* of excellence in his art as made him not easily satisfied with efforts to obtain it ; and surely he who was never led by vanity or conceit to be contented with his *own* works, could not be expected to show great indulgence to the works of others." I know not what standard of excellence was present to the fancy of Opie ; but if a man is to withhold his approbation from all works which fail to equal the best of the golden days of art, he may shut his mouth for ever.

He was exposed, as all men of eminence are, to the attacks of the envious and the malevolent. A speculator in biography having handled one man of genius with sharp and vulgar severity, singled

out Opie for his second victim, and so little did he keep his infamous purpose a secret, that it reached the ear of the artist. Opie, having perused some of his adversary's compositions, saw that the man mistook the venom of the arrow for the vigour of the bow: he only smiled, and said, " If this is all he can do, he is welcome to say any thing of me he likes. I shall neither menace him nor bribe him into silence." " For his fame, *latterly* at least," says Mrs. Opie, " he was indebted to himself alone: by no puffs, no paragraphs, did he endeavour to obtain public notice: and I have heard him, with virtuous pride, declare that whether his reputation were great or small, it was self-derived, and he was indebted for it to no exertions save those of his own industry and talents. He might, like others, mistake sometimes weeds for flowers, and bring them home, and carefully preserve them as such; but the weeds were gathered by his own hands, and he had, at least, by his labour deserved that they should be valuable acquisitions."

His heart was with his art—other artists, as Northcote said, painted to live, but Opie lived to paint; and though he was dilatory about praising the works which his brethren produced with the brush, he was forward enough in admiring their attempts with the pen. " Whatever," said Mrs. Opie, " had a tendency to exalt painting and its professors in the eyes of the world, was a source of gratification to him. He used often to expatiate on the great classical attainments of Mr. Fuseli, whose wit he admired, and whose conversation he delighted in: but I have often thought that one

cause of the pleasure which he derived from mentioning that gentleman's attainments, was his conviction, that the learning of Mr. Fuseli was an honour to his profession, and tended to exalt it in the opinion of society." Nor was his pleasure less in reading the Poem on Art, by Mr. Shee—a work which will be valued while knowledge, feeling and elegance are in estimation.

An imaginary sum was floating incessantly before Opie's eyes, which his pencil was to accumulate. That golden speculation at length achieved, he intended to retire from art—establish a gallery of good paintings, and a well-stocked library; and with his wife by his side, and all cares for a well-filled easel given to the winds, enjoy life like one who knew it was short. As he was frugal and temperate, his expenses were small; and as he was a quick workman, his gains were large. He was too proud to incur debts, and not so vain as to give expensive entertainments to those who would probably have paid them with sarcasms. He was one likely, therefore, to achieve his wishes in gaining that desired sum, which was to come with healing on its wings to the spirit of the painter. But he did not, perhaps, reflect, that in retiring from his profession an artist retires also from his station in society. An artist is like an instrument of music, which gives joy and gladness when skilfully touched, but is only looked upon as an idle encumbrance and a piece of wood when silent and out of tune.

Opie having written a Memoir of Reynolds for Wolcot's edition of Pilkington's Dictionary of Painters, and delivered lectures on art at the

British Institution, aspired to the Professorship of Painting in the Royal Academy, when Barry was ejected. In the Memoir of Sir Joshua, he had exhibited knowledge of his subject, a just perception of character, and no small infirmity of taste; in his lectures at the Institution he had been considered confused, abrupt, and unmethodical; but now, with confirmed taste and an increase of knowledge, he offered himself a candidate for the professorship.—He was unexpectedly opposed by Fuseli. When that eminent scholar was named, he relinquished his pretensions—but it is no small proof of the vanity of Opie, that he declared as he withdrew from the contest, he would have yielded to no one save Henry Fuseli. When the Professor was made Keeper he renewed his claim, and was instantly elected.

Of his Four Lectures, on Design, Invention, Chiaro-Scuoro, and Colouring, some account must be given, and a short one will suffice. Few who read them will concur in the praise bestowed on his discourses, at the Institution, by the late excellent Bishop of Durham, “you were known before as a great painter, Mr. Opie, you will now be known as a great writer also.” They are clear and sensible enough, but deficient in original grasp of mind—there are few vigorous sallies, or poetical flights, or passages of deep discernment and delicate discrimination. He wants imagination to raise him to the height of his “great argument,” and his powers of illustration are neither vivid nor various. Yet it cannot be denied that many valuable reflections are scattered over these four lectures. Let all those youths who desire to become artists

read the following admirable passage thrice over before they wet the brush.

"Impressed as I am at the present moment with a full conviction of the difficulties attendant on the practice of painting, I cannot but feel it also my duty to caution every one who hears me, against entering into it from improper motives, and with inadequate views of the subject: as they will thereby only run a risk of entailing misery and disgrace on themselves and their connexions during the rest of their lives. Should any student therefore happen to be present who has taken up the art on the supposition of finding it an easy and amusing employment—any one who has been sent into the Academy by his friend, in the idea that he may cheaply acquire an honourable and profitable profession—any one who has mistaken a petty kind of imitative monkey talent for genius—any one who hopes by it to get rid of what he thinks a more vulgar or disagreeable situation, to escape confinement at the counter, or the desk—any one urged merely by vanity or interest—or, in short, impelled by any consideration but a real and unconquerable passion for excellence;—let him drop it at once, and avoid these walls and every thing connected with them, as he would the pestilence: for if he have not this unquenchable liking, in addition to all the requisites above enumerated, he may pine in indigence, or sculk through life as a hackney likeness-taker, a copier, a drawing-master, or pattern drawer to young ladies, or he may turn picture-cleaner and help time to destroy excellencies which he cannot rival—but he must never hope to be, in the proper sense of the word,

a painter. Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to excellence, and few there be that find it."

His notion of the ideal or the beautiful is natural and just. "I will not undertake," he says, "the perilous task of defining the word beauty: but I have no hesitation in asserting, that when beauty is said to be the proper end of art, it must not be understood as confining the choice to one set of objects, or as breaking down the boundaries and destroying the natural classes, orders, and divisions of things, but as meaning the perfection of each subject in its kind, in regard to form, colour, and all its other associated and consistent attributes. In this qualified, and I will venture to say, proper acceptation of the word in regard to art, it may be applied to nearly all things most excellent in their different ways. Thus we have various modes of beauty in the statues of the Venus, the Juno, the Niobe, the Antinous, and the Apollo; and thus we may speak, without exciting a confusion of ideas, of a beautiful peasant as well as of a beautiful princess, of a beautiful child, or of a beautiful old man; of a beautiful cottage, a beautiful church, a beautiful palace, or even of a beautiful ruin. The discovery or conception of this great and perfect idea of things, of nature in its purest and most essential form, unimpaired by disease, unmutilated by accident, and unsophisticated by local habits and temporary fashions, and the exemplification of it in practice by getting above individual imitation, rising from the species to the genus, and uniting in every subject all the perfection of which it is capable in its

kind, is the highest and ultimate exertion of human genius."

In his Lecture upon Invention also there is much to commend. "Unfortunately," he says, "this most inestimable quality in which genius is thought more particularly to consist, is of all human faculties the least subject to reason or rule, being derived from heaven alone according to some; attributed by others to organization; by a third class, to industry; by a fourth, to circumstances; by a fifth, to the influence of the stars; and in the general opinion, the gift of nature only. But though few teach us how to improve it, and still fewer how to obtain it, all agree that nothing can be done without it. Destitute of invention, a poet is but a plagiary, and a painter but a copier of others. But however true it may be, that invention cannot be reduced to rule and taught by regular process, it must necessarily, like every other effect, have an adequate cause. It cannot be by chance that excellence is produced with certainty and constancy; and however remote and obscure its origin, thus much is certain, that observation must precede invention, and a mass of materials must be collected before we can combine them. He, therefore, who wishes to be a painter must overlook no kind of knowledge. He must range desarts and mountains for images, picture upon his mind every tree of the forest and flower of the valley, observe the crags of the rock and the pinnacles of the palace, follow the windings of the rivulet, and watch the changes of the clouds: in short, all nature, savage or civilized, animate or inanimate, the plants of the garden, the animals of

the wood, the minerals of the earth, and the motions of the sky, must undergo his examination. Whatever is great, whatever is beautiful, whatever is interesting, and whatever is dreadful, must be familiar to his imagination, and concur to store his mind with an inexhaustible variety of ideas ready for association on every possible occasion, to embellish sentiment and give effect to truth. It is moreover absolutely necessary that then the epitome of all—his principal subject and his judge should become a particular object of his investigation: he must be acquainted with all that is characteristic and beautiful, both in regard to his mental and bodily endowments—must study their analogies and learn how far moral and physical excellence are connected and dependent one on the other. He must further observe the power of the passions in all their combinations, and trace their changes as modified by constitution, or by the accidental influences of climate or custom—from the sprightliness of infancy to the despondency of decrepitude: he must be familiar with all the modes of life, and above all, endeavour to discriminate the essential from the accidental, to divest himself of the prejudices of his own age and country, and disregarding temporary fashions and local taste, learn to see nature and beauty in the abstract, and rise to general and transcendental truth, which will always be the same."

Next to the contemplation of nature he urges the study of poetry, which abounds in the noblest pictures and the most splendid descriptions—unites the present with the past, and anticipates the future. He feels, however, that many of the

sublimest and most touching passages in poetry cannot be embodied in painting: and he also feels that the multitude, with many men of taste among them, are slow in acknowledging the merits which belong to the imagination, and turn coldly away from its most magnificent efforts. There is, indeed, a certain coarseness of feeling as to works of elegance and fancy which pervades this country; and it extends to the labours of the pen as well as to those of the pencil and the chisel. In other nations the presence of such things inspires a kind of awe: with us a statue is occasionally a mark to cast stones at, and the mob at best bestow their shilling to stare at what they cannot enjoy. "So habituated," says Opie, "are the people of this country to the sight of portraiture only, that they can scarcely as yet consider painting in any other light: they will hardly admire a landscape that is not a view of a particular place, nor a history unless composed of likenesses of the persons represented, and are apt to be staggered, confounded, and wholly unprepared to follow such vigorous flights of imagination as would—*as will* be felt and applauded with enthusiasm in a more advanced and liberal stage of criticism. In our exhibitions, which often display extraordinary powers wasted on worthless subjects, one's ear is pained, one's very soul is rent with hearing crowd after crowd sweeping round, and instead of discussing the merits of the different works on view, as to conception, composition, and execution, all reiterating the same dull and tasteless questions, *who is that?* and *is it like?*" Passages such as these would reflect credit on any professor the Academy ever possessed.

On the delivery of his first lecture in the Academy Opie was complimented by his brethren : he was escorted home by Sir William Beechey, and appeared to his wife in a flush of joy. Next morning he said he had passed a restless night, for he was so *elated* that he could not sleep.

When Opie had finished his course of Lectures, Mr. Prince Hoare requested an article for his periodical paper called *The Artist*. "I am tired"—such was his answer—"I am tired of writing. I shall be a gentleman during the spring months, keep a horse, and ride out every morning." This vision of happiness, such as it was, he lived not to realize. He was attacked by a slow and a consuming illness, which baffled the knowledge of five skilful doctors : Pitcairn and Baillie were of the number. They were unable to cure or even to comprehend it. When it was known that he was seriously ill, his friends, and they were numerous and respectable, came round him with affectionate solicitude. Amongst those that he loved most was Henry Thomson, now a member of the Academy, and to him he confided the finishing of the robes of the Duke of Gloucester's portrait. On Saturday, when the pictures were to be delivered for the exhibition at Somerset House, the picture of the Royal Duke was placed at the foot of his bed. A fit of delirium had subsided : he lifted his head, and said, "There is not colour enough on the back ground." More colour was added : Opie looked at it with great satisfaction, and said with a smile, "Thomson, it will do now—it will do now : if you could not do it, nobody could." The delirium returned, and took its hue from the pic-

ture he had just looked at. He imagined himself employed in his favourite pursuit, and continued painting in idea till death interposed on Thursday, the 9th of April, 1807. On dissection, the lower part of the spinal marrow and its investing membrane were found slightly inflamed, and the brain surcharged with blood. On Monday, April 20, he was interred in St. Paul's Cathedral, near Sir Joshua Reynolds.

In person Opie looked like an inspired peasant: even in his most courtly days there was a country air about him, and he was abrupt in his language and careless in his dress, without being conscious of either. His looks savoured of melancholy—some have said of moroseness: the portrait which he has left of himself shows a noble forehead and an intellectual eye. There are few who cannot feel his talents, and all must admire his fortitude. He came coarse and uneducated from the country into the polished circles of London—was caressed, invited, praised, and patronized, for one little year or so, and then the giddy tide of fashion receded; but he was not left a wreck. He had that strength of mind which triumphs over despair. He estimated the patronage of fickle ignorance at what it was worth, and lived to invest his name with a brighter as well as steadier halo than that of fashionable wonder.

His literary productions, have, I think, been overrated: yet they are respectable; I will even allow them to be wonderful for one in his condition, who had a laborious profession to follow. The great defect is what one would least have expected—the want of vigour and energy.

What he thus failed to work into his writings he poured largely into his paintings. There is a freshness of look and a rude homely strength in his pictures which belong to the wide academy of nature, and came upon him in Cornwall. He is not a leader perhaps—but neither is he the servile follower of any man or any school. His original deficiency of imagination no labour could strengthen and no study raise. His model mastered him ; and he seemed to want the power of elevating what was mean, and of substituting the elegant for the vulgar. Opie saw the common but not the poetic nature of his subjects : he had no visions of the grand and the heroic. His pencil could strike out a rough and manly Cromwell, but was unfit to cope with the dark subtle spirit of a Vane, or the princely eye and bearing of a Falkland or a Montrose. His strength lay in boldness of effect, simplicity of composition—in artless attitudes, and in the vivid portraiture of individual nature.

---

## GEORGE MORLAND.

---

**GEORGE MORLAND**, the eldest son of Henry Robert Morland, was born in the Haymarket, London, on the 26th of June, 1763. He came of a race of painters. He was lineally descended from Sir Samuel Morland, an eminent mathematician and artist ; his grandfather was a painter, and lived in the lower side of St. James's Square ; and his father, after the failure of some extensive speculations, which all his biographers have alluded to, but left undescribed, followed the same profession, and painted, drew, and dealt in pictures with such indifferent success, that he became bankrupt, and was compelled to bring up his family of three sons and two daughters in indigence and obscurity.

It is said that the elder Morland sought to repair his broken fortunes by the talents of his son George—who, almost as soon as he escaped from the cradle, took to the pencil and crayon, and showed that he inherited art the natural way. The indications of early talent in others are nothing compared to his. At four, five, and six years of age, he made drawings worthy of ranking him among the common race of students ; the praise bestowed on these by the Society of Artists, to whom they were exhibited, and the money which



collectors were willing to pay for the works of this new wonder, induced his father to urge him onward in his studies—and his progress was rapid. But it is a dangerous thing to overtask either the mind or the body at these years, and there is every reason to believe that young Morland suffered both of these evils. His father stimulated him by praise and by indulgences at the table, and to ensure his continuance at his allotted tasks, shut him up in a garret, and excluded him from free air, which strengthens the body, and from education—that free air which nourishes the mind. His stated work for a time was making drawings from pictures and from plaster casts, which his father carried out and sold; but as he increased in skill, he chose his subjects from popular songs and ballads, such as “Young Roger came tapping at Dolly’s window,” “My name it is Jack Hall,” “I am a bold Shoemaker, from Belfast Town I came,” and other productions of the mendicant muse. The copies of pictures and casts were commonly sold for three half-crowns each; the original sketches—some of them a little free in posture, and not over delicately handled, were framed and disposed of for any sum from two to five guineas, according to the cleverness of the piece, or the generosity of the purchaser. Though far inferior to the productions of his manhood, they were much admired; engravers found it profitable to copy them, and before he was sixteen years old, his name had flown far and wide.

But long before he was sixteen, he had begun to form those unfortunate habits by which the story of his life is to be darkened. From ten years of age, he appears to have led the life of a prisoner

and a slave under the roof of his father, hearing in this seclusion the merry din of the schoolboys in the street, without hope of partaking in their sports. By-and-by he managed to obtain an hour's relaxation at the twilight, and then associated with such idle and profligate boys as chance threw in his way, and learned from them a love of coarse enjoyment, and the knowledge that it could not well be obtained without money. Oppression keeps the school of Cunning; young Morland resolved not only to share in the profits of his own talents, but also to snatch an hour or so of amusement, without consulting his father. When he made three drawings for his father, he made one secretly for himself, and giving a signal from his window, lowered it by a string to two or three knowing boys, who found a purchaser at a reduced price, and spent the money with the young artist. A common taproom was an indifferent school of manners, whatever it might be for painting, and there this gifted lad was now often to be found late in the evening, carousing with hostlers and potboys, handing round the quart pot, and singing his song or cracking his joke.

His father, having found out the contrivance by which he raised money for this kind of revelry, adopted, in his own imagination, a wiser course. He resolved to make his studies as pleasant to him as he could; and as George was daily increasing in fame and his works in price, this could be done without any loss. He indulged his son, now some sixteen years old, with wine, pampered his appetite with richer food, and moreover allowed him a little pocket-money to spend among his companions, and

purchase acquaintance with what the vulgar call life. He dressed him, too, in a style of ultra-dandyism, and exhibited him at his easel to his customers, attired in a green coat with very long skirts, and immense yellow buttons, buckskin breeches, and top boots with spurs. He permitted him too to sing wild songs, swear grossly, and talk about any thing he liked with such freedom as makes anxious parents tremble. With all these indulgences the boy was not happy ; he aspired but the more eagerly after full liberty and the unrestrained enjoyment of the profits of his pencil.

During this feverish period he was introduced to Reynolds, obtained permission to copy some of his works, and began to be very generally noticed as an artist of no common promise. His father was his constant companion when he went out a-copying ; more, it is said, though it can scarcely be believed, with the intention of seizing upon his productions, than with the desire of preserving him from loose associates or the charms of the tap-room. He went to copy the painting of Garrick between Tragedy and Comedy in the gallery of Mr. Angerstein, at Blackheath ; and the proprietor, a man of taste, and a lover of art, desired to view the work in its progress. The elder Morland declared that his son George had refused to begin his copy till it was promised that no one should overlook him, and that he should act in the house as he thought proper. This coarse arrogance was submitted to—young Morland refused all invitations to mix with the family of Angerstein—he descended to the servants' hall—emptied his flagon—cracked his wild jest, and was exceedingly happy.

How he escaped from the thraldom of his father has been related by Hassell and by Smith, and as they contradict each other, I shall rehearse both accounts. The former, who knew Morland well, says, that "he was determined to make his escape from the rigid confinement which paternal authority had imposed upon him; and, wild as a young quadruped that had broke loose from his den, at length, though late, effectually accomplished his purpose."

"Young George was of so unsettled a disposition," says Smith, "that his father, being fully aware of his extraordinary talents, was determined to force him to get his own living, and gave him a guinea, with something like the following observation: 'I am *determined* to encourage your idleness no longer; there—take that guinea, and apply to your art and support yourself.' This Morland told me, and added, that from that moment he commenced and continued wholly on his own account." It would appear by Smith's relation, that our youth, instead of supporting his father, had all along been depending on his help; this, however, contradicts not only Hassell, but Fuseli also, who, in his edition of Pilkington's Dictionary, accuses the elder Morland of avariciously pocketing the whole profits of his son's productions.

In the seventeenth year of his age he left his father's house, with his easel, his palette, his pencils—and dressed in his favourite green coat and top boots. "He was in the very extreme of foppish puppyism," says Hassell, "his head, when ornamented according to his own taste, resembled a snow-ball, after the model of Tippy Bob, of dramatic memory, to which was attached a short thick

tail, not unlike a painter's brush." Thus accomplished and accoutred, with little money in his pocket, and a large conceit of himself, he made an excursion to Margate, with the two-fold purpose of enjoying *life* and painting portraits. His skill of hand was great—his facility, it is said, wondrous; while his oddity of dress, his extreme youth, and the story of his early studies, attracted curiosity and attention—and sitters came—the wealthy and the beautiful. But the painter loved low company—all that was polished or genteel was the object of his implacable dislike. He had not patience to finish any portrait that he commenced, nor the prudence to conceal his scorn of his betters. The man who could leave wealthy sitters to join in the amusement of a pig, an ass, or a smock race, was not likely to have such patrons long; and Morland returned to London with a dozen of unfinished portraits, on which he had received little or no money.

A well-known nobleman had heard of Morland's talents, and now commissioned him to paint a few pictures, for which he provided the subjects. This is a sort of drudgery which genius, if it consults its dignity, will seldom submit to; but when the subjects are "not particularly distinguished for their purity"—these are the words of Hassell—the commissions ought to be rejected with indignant loathing. To those commissions the biographer now cited hesitates not to impute that "particular distaste which he ever after evinced for the society of virtuous women;" and discovers in them "a reason why so striking a resemblance to the frail sisterhood is found in the female subjects which occur

in some of his productions." Let his lordship answer for real and not imaginary sins. Morland had moved too long in gross company to leave the honour of polluting his mind to any one of the peerage. He had become ere this the boon-companion of hostlers, pot-boys, horse-jockies, money-lenders, pawnbrokers, punks and pugilists. With these comrades he roamed the streets and made excursions by land and water; the ribald jest, the practical joke, and scenes coarse and sensual, formed long ere now the staple of his life.

Amidst all this wildness and dissipation, his name was still rising. He valued his pencil as the means of acquiring not distinction, but the gold wherewith to charm away creditors and liquidate tavern bills. The pictures which he dashed off according to the craving of the hour, are numerous and excellent. They are all fac-similes of low nature—graphic copies of common life—their truth is their beauty, and if they have anything poetical about them, it lies in the singular ease and ruminating repose which is the reigning character of many. Pigs and asses were his chief favourites; and if he had stolen them, or dealt in them, as one of his rustic admirers declared, he could not have painted them better. The sheep on the hill, the cattle in the shade, and the peasant superintending the economy of the barn-yard, the piggery, or the cow-house, shared also largely in his regard. He was likewise skilful in landscape—not in that combination of what is lovely or grand, over which a poetical mind sheds a splendour that anticipates paradise; but in close, dogged fidelity, which claims the merit of looking like some known spot

where pigs prowl, cattle graze, or asses browse. At this period he lodged in a neat house at Kensall Green, on the road to Harrow, and was frequently in the company of Ward, the painter, whose example of moral steadiness was exhibited to him in vain.

While he resided at Kensall Green, he fell in love with Miss Ward—a young lady of beauty and modesty—and soon afterwards married her; she was the sister of his friend the painter; and to make the family union stronger, Ward sued for the hand of Maria Morland, and in about a month after his sister's marriage obtained it. In the joy of this double union, the brother artists took joint possession of a good house in High Street, Marylebone. Morland suspended for a time his habit of insobriety, discarded the social comrades of his laxer hours, and imagined himself reformed. But discord broke out between the sisters concerning the proper division of rule and authority in the house; and Morland, whose partner's claim perhaps was the weaker, took refuge in lodgings in Great Portland Street. His passion for late hours and low company, restrained through courtship and the honey-moon, now broke out with the violence of a stream which had been dammed in rather than dried up. It was in vain that his wife entreated and remonstrated—his old propensities prevailed; and the post-boy, the pawnbroker, and the pugilist, were summoned again to his side, no more to be separated.

Before the rupture of this brotherhood, Ward made some engravings from the pictures of Morland, which obtained the notice of Raphael Smith,

an engraver of talent and enterprise, who knew the town, and felt the value, and foresaw the popularity of those productions. Under his directions Morland painted many pictures from familiar scenes of life ; Smith engraved them with considerable skill, the prints had a sale rapid beyond example; and nothing stood between the painter and fortune but his own indiscretion. "Those works," says Hassell, "showed that he had a wonderful facility in seizing those propitious coincidences—those light, ornamental, and minute proprieties and graces which contribute such an ample store to the genuine stock of original composition of consummate art. The harmonious combination of his back grounds, his drapery, ever natural and decorous, without confusion or perplexity ; his children, also, his sheep, his horses, his pigs, and all the appendages of the rural landscape, including every other department of picturesque scenery, are still classed among the finest of modern productions, are still objects of imitation to young students, and are still considered and exhibited by the best judges and patrons of the fine arts, as most remarkably neat, correct, and elegant views of nature."

In those days, before folly had entirely fixed him for her own, Morland loved to visit the Isle of Wight, and some of his best pictures are copied from scenes upon the coast. A rocky shore—an agitated surf—fishermen repairing their nets and careening their boats, or disposing of their fish, generally formed part of his pictures. He was ever ready too to join them in their labour, and more so in the mirth and carousal which followed.

A friend once found him at Freshwater-gate, in a low public-house called The Cabin. Sailors, rustics, and fishermen, were seated round him in a kind of ring, the rooftree rung with laughter and song ; and Morland, with manifest reluctance, left their company for the conversation of his friend. "George," said his monitor, "you must have reasons for keeping such company." "Reasons, and good ones," said the artist, laughing, "see—where could I find such a picture of life as that, unless among the originals of The Cabin?" He held up his sketch-book and showed a correct delineation of the very scene in which he had so lately been the presiding spirit. One of his best pictures contains this fac-simile of the tap-room, with its guests and furniture.

The early management of his father had made the whole swarm of picture dealers, cleaners, and copiers acquainted with Morland's value, and, what was far more unfortunate, had let them into the secret of his personal tastes. They knew his love of low company, his delight in the bottle, and his desire to enjoy the passing moment, whatever expense it might incur ; and some of them were ever at his elbow to lay down the gold for present pleasures, upon the understanding that the pencil should clear off the debt. His absurd aversion to decent company naturally aided the views of those sordid miscreants ; they applauded his vulgar prejudice as true independence, and pushed about the jest, apparently at the expense of "the fine people," but really and truly at the cost of the unhappy Morland, who sat in idea sole monarch of the realm of free and unshackled art. These

wretches affected a vice to which they were strangers ; they put on the aspect of prodigality, and with the determination in their hearts of exacting a bitter per-centage for this condescension, accompanied him on his country excursions, made up his drinking parties, and attended at his painting-room with a purse in one hand and a bottle in the other. "It frequently happened," observes one of his biographers, "when a picture had been bespoke by one of his friends, who advanced some of the money to induce him to work, if the purchaser did not stand by to see it finished and carry it away with him, some other person, who was lurking within sight for that purpose, and knew the state of Morland's pocket, by the temptation of a few guineas laid upon the table, carried off the picture. Thus all were served in their turn; and though each exulted in the success of the trick when he was so lucky as to get a picture in this easy way, they all joined in exclaiming against Morland's want of honesty in not keeping his promises to them."

Those honest sufferers were not without their remedy. The picture which they purchased for five guineas sold readily for twenty ; one guinea's worth of liquor was often repaid by a sketch which brought ten; and if that was insufficient, they employed some dexterous and unprincipled limner to make fac-similes of the most popular of Morland's works, which they found people rich enough and ignorant enough to buy as originals. "I once saw," says Hassell, "twelve copies from a small picture of Morland's at one time in a dealer's shop, with the original in the centre ; the proprietor of

which, with great gravity and unblushing assurance, inquired if I could distinguish the difference." With reptiles such as these, genius ought never to come into communion ; it must be confessed, however, that Morland was not incommoded in his intercourse with them by any over-righteous notions as to money matters. In the course of the years 1790, 1791, and 1792, when his cleverest pictures were painted, the admiring dealers swarmed round him with offers of pecuniary assistance to any amount. George put his hands into their pockets without the least ceremony. He was a joyful borrower, and took whatever was offered without scruple or hesitation. He made no nice distinctions ; for he accepted from all, and he held out to all the pleasing prospect of sevenfold remuneration from the pencil.

The evil consequences of all this required no prophetic spirit to foretell. It was in vain that his wife, a woman of sense and beauty, endeavoured to reclaim him ; equally vain was the interposition of his friends ; who were only laughed at when they assured him that a life of unmeasured conviviality, and habits of incalculable profusion, must injure his skill of hand and his capacity of intellect, and immure him, sooner or later, in a prison. His fine constitution triumphed for a time over the ordinary results of debauchery, and his knowledge of the town and active adroitness in avoiding tip-staffs, kept him long from acquaintance with the jail. It is probable, indeed, that those to whom he was indebted were more willing to alarm him, than actually take his liberty from him ; they knew that confinement could not hasten the payment—

that the estate out of which their money was to come was of the mind ; and, what was equally serious, it could be turned over to a new swarm of dealers in pictures, who would inherit all their profits.

Having received an invitation from Claude Lorraine Smith, a gentleman of Leicestershire, he suddenly vanished from the constant watchfulness of these creditors, carrying with him a trusty friend and five-bottle debauchée, whose neglect of the toilet had obtained him the name of Dirty Brookes. His entertainer, an artist himself and an encourager of art, was also wealthy and hospitable, and Morland was received with great kindness ; even Dirty Brookes was an object of attention and solicitude. It is true that the artist, in the midst of Mr. Smith's company, was sometimes heard to sigh for the rougher freedom of the ale-house, and lamented to his bosom friend that so much good wine should be drunk without loud mirth and merry song, and in accordance with an etiquette distressing to the convivial notions of hostlers and pugilists. He found some consolation, perhaps, in accompanying Mr. Smith to the fox-chase, or at least in the conviviality which at evening rewarded the devotees of that rough pastime ; and it is reported that both he and Dirty Brookes regained the reputation which they lost by day in the chase, through their prowess over the bottle by night. He found time, however, to make some sketches of Leicestershire scenery, which he afterwards wrought into pictures.

His sudden disappearance from London excited general alarm in the whole righteous race of picture-dealers ; no one knew what had become of

him, and a waggish companion insinuated that he was gone to France. Some of those men had advanced money on bespoke pictures ; others had paid money upon works begun, and the interest of the whole was concerned—it would be only misleading the reader to say that Morland felt at all anxious respecting them. To him the completion of such commissions was a matter of total indifference ; he knew that these patrons had doomed him to constant slavery, that they merely looked upon him as an engine which augmented their incomes, and of which they had only to keep the wheels oiled. When he re-appeared, the gloom passed from their looks, and they hastened to share in the spoils arising from his paintings of the scenery of Leicestershire.

Yet wild and imprudent as he was, and sunk in almost constant debauchery, his skill seemed only to augment, and his rapidity of execution to increase. Indolence cannot be ranked among his sins. Pleasure he found could not be purchased without money ; his companions were not the followers of an empty purse, and even Dirty Brookes himself, who fell a sacrifice in sharing Morland's excesses, was more moderate in his mirth when he was in danger of settling the reckoning from his own pocket. To get money it was necessary to work ; and certainly during his brief career he wrought diligently. Four thousand pictures, and most of them of great merit, which he left to continue his name, tell us that, with the sharp sword of necessity at his back, he laboured as diligently and successfully as if he had lived in wealth and in honour.

During this period Morland lived at Paddington, where he was visited by the popular pugilists of the day, by the most eminent-horse-dealers, and by his never-failing companions the picture merchants. He was a lover of guinea-pigs, dogs, rabbits, and squirrels ; he extended his affection also to asses. At one time he was the owner of eight saddle horses, which were kept at the White Lion ; and, that the place might be worthy of an artist's stud, he painted the sign where they stood at livery with his own hand. He wished to be thought a consummate judge of horseflesh and a dealer in the article. But he was taught that his wisdom did not lie in that way by two or three sagacious horse-jockies, and began to find that all the cunning of the island was not monopolized by the picture dealers. For indifferent horses he paid with excellent pictures ; or, what was worse, with bills which he was not always, if ever, prepared to take up ; and when due, purchased an extension of the time by the first picture he had ready. His wine-merchant too was in the discounting line, and obtained sometimes a picture worth fifty pounds for similar accommodation. "He heaped folly upon folly," says Hassell, "with such dire rapidity, that a fortune of ten thousand pounds per annum would have proved insufficient for the support of his waste and prodigality."

He was as vain as he was prodigal—was anxious for the smiles of the meanest of mankind ; and as for flattery, any one might lay it on with a trowel. At the grossness of his humour all the hostlers laughed, and he that laughed loudest was generally rewarded with a half-crown or a pair of buckskin

breeches little the worse for wear. His acquaintances on the north road were numerous ; he knew the driver of every coach, and the pedigree of the horses, and taking his stand at Bob Bellamy's inn at Highgate, would halloo to the gentlemen of the whip as they made their appearance, and treat them to gin and brandy. "Frequently," says one of his biographers, "he would parade, with a pipe in his mouth, before the door of the house, and hail the carriages as they passed in succession before him ; and, from being so well known, was generally greeted in return by a familiar salute from the postilion. The consequence he attached to this species of homage was almost beyond belief."

He once (we are told) received an invitation to Barnet, and was hastening thither with Hassell and another friend, when he was stopt at Whetstone turnpike by a lumber or jockey cart, driven by two persons, one of them a chimney-sweep, who were disputing with the toll-gatherer. Morland endeavoured to pass, when one of the wayfarers cried, "What ! Mr. Morland, wont you speak to a body !" The artist endeavoured to elude further greeting, but this was not to be ; the other bawled out so lustily, that Morland was obliged to recognize at last his companion and crony, Hooper, a tinman and pugilist. After a hearty shake of the hand, the boxer turned to his neighbour the chimney-sweep and said, " Why, Dick, don't you know this here gentleman ? 'tis my friend, Mr. Morland." The sooty charioteer smiling a recognition forced his unwelcome hand upon his brother of the brush ; they then both whipt their horses and departed. This rencontre mortified Morland very sensibly ;

he declared that he knew nothing of the chimney-sweep, and that he was forced upon him by the impertinence of Hooper : but the artist's habits made the story be generally believed, and "Sweeps, your honour," was a joke which he was often obliged to hear.

Raphael Smith, the engraver, had employed Morland for years on works *from* which he engraved, and *by* which he won large sums of money. He called one day with Bannister the comedian to look at a picture which was upon the easel. Smith was satisfied with the artist's progress, and said, "I shall now proceed on my morning ride." "Stay a moment," said Morland, laying down his brush, "and I will go with you." "Morland," answered the other, in an emphatic tone, which could not be mistaken, "I have an appointment with a *gentleman*, who is waiting for me." Such a sarcasm might have cured any man who was not incurable ; it made but a momentary impression upon the mind of our painter, who cursed the engraver, and returned to his palette.

His love of horses, once great, gradually subsided ; he at length studiously refused any intercourse with the worthy fraternity of horse-dealers, not because he felt that they had cheated him as often as he risked making a bargain, but because he had found another method of disposing of his pictures. He now retired to some secluded place, set up his easel, dashed off a few paintings, and entrusted them to the care and the conscience of a bosom crony, whose name is not mentioned, and whose business it was to dispose of them in the most profitable market. The claim which this

associate had upon his confidence was confirmed by many a deep and prolonged carousal, nor is there reason to believe that the man failed to do his best—he returned with the money—it was instantly melted into gin and brandy.

All his early pride of dress gradually vanished ; his clothes were now mean, his looks squalid, and when he ventured into the streets of London, he was so haunted by creditors, real or imaginary, that he skulked rather than walked, and kept a look-out on suspicious alleys and corners of evil reputation. If he saw any one looking anxiously at him, which many must have done out of compassion for the wreck which folly had wrought with genius, he instantly imagined him a creditor, and fled like quicksilver, for he was in debt to so many that he dreaded duns in every street. Harassed by incessant apprehensions of arrest, he shifted from place to place, and before the close of his career was acquainted with every spot of secrecy or refuge within the four counties which surround the metropolis. One day, wearied with perpetual changing of abode, he took his crony with him to make a regular inspection of the King's Bench Prison. They were conducted over that strange scene, which still remains exactly as it is described by Smollett, and departed with a lively conviction that such quarters as Hatchway and Tom Pipes coveted so earnestly would be worse than any our painter had yet experienced. The squalors of *the Bare*, however, left no impression strong enough to alter his conduct.

On one occasion he hid himself in Hackney ; where his anxious looks and secluded manner of

life induced some of his charitable neighbours to believe him a maker of forged notes. The Directors of the Bank despatched two of their most dexterous emissaries to inquire, reconnoitre, search, and seize. These men arrived, and began to draw lines of circumvallation round the painter's retreat; he was not however to be surprised—mistaking those agents of evil mien for bailiffs, he escaped from behind as they approached in front—fled into Hoxton, and never halted till he had hid himself in London. Nothing was found to justify suspicion, and when Mrs. Morland, who was his companion in this retreat, told them who her husband was, and showed them some unfinished pictures, they made such a report at the Bank, that the Directors presented him with a couple of Bank notes of twenty pounds each, by way of compensation for the alarm they had given him.

The sad estate into which he had fallen made any story of his distress be believed, and before his death, as well as after—"anecdotes of Morland the painter" were regularly manufactured for newspapers and magazines. "He was found"—I copy these words from Fuseli's edition of Pilkington—"He was found at another time in a lodging in Somer's Town, in the following most extraordinary circumstances:—his infant child, that had been dead nearly three weeks, lay in its coffin; in one corner of the room an ass and foal stood munching barley straw out of the cradle—a sow and pigs were sojourning themselves in the recess of an old cupboard, and himself whistling over a beautiful picture that he was finishing at his easel, with a bottle of gin hung upon one side, and a live mouse sitting for

its portrait on the other." I must however abate the pathetic of this scene. Morland lived and died childless; consequently, the infant dead in the coffin, and the ass and its foal eating straw out of the cradle must be dismissed from the group.

It may be safer to select a few anecdotes from Hassell, his intimate friend. This person's first introduction to Morland was in character. "As I was walking (he says) towards Paddington on a summer morning, to inquire about the health of a relation, I saw a man posting on before me with a sucking-pig, which he carried in his arms like a child. The piteous squeaks of the little animal, and the singular mode of conveyance, drew spectators to door and window; the person however who carried it minded no one, but to every dog that barked—and there were not a few—he set down the pig, pitted him against the dog, and then followed the chase which was sure to ensue. In this manner he went through several streets in Mary-le-bone, and at last, stopping at the door of one of my friends, was instantly admitted. I also knocked and entered, but my surprise was great on finding this original sitting with the pig still under his arm, and still greater when I was introduced to Morland the painter."

A mutual friend, at whose house Morland resided when in the Isle of Wight, having set out for London, left an order with an acquaintance in Cowes to give the painter his own price for whatever works he might please to send. The pictures were accompanied by a regular solicitation for cash in proportion, or according to the nature of the subject. At length a small but very highly-finished drawing

arrived, and as the sum demanded seemed out of all proportion with the size of the drawing, the conscientious agent transmitted the piece to London and stated the price. The answer by post was, ‘Pay what is asked, and get as many others as you can at the same price.’ There is not one sketch in the collection thus made but what would now produce thrice its original cost.

One evening Hassell and some friends were returning to town from Hampstead, when Morland accosted them in the character of a mounted patrole, wearing the parish great-coat, girded with a broad black belt, and a pair of pistols depending. He hailed them with “horse patrole!” in his natural voice; they recognised him and laughed heartily, upon which he entreated them to stop at the Mother Red Cap, a well known public-house, till he joined them. He soon made his appearance in his proper dress, and gave way to mirth and good fellowship. On another occasion he paid a *parishioner*, who was drawn for constable, to be permitted to serve in his place; he billeted soldiers during the day, and presided in the constable’s chair at night. At another time, having promised to paint a picture for M. de Calonne, he seemed unwilling to begin, but was stimulated by the following stratagem. Opposite to his house in Paddington was the White Lion; Hassell directed two of his friends to breakfast there, and instructed them to look anxiously towards the artist’s windows, and occasionally walk up and down before the house. He then waited on Morland, who only brandished his brush at the canvass and refused to work. After waiting some time, Hassell went to

the window and affected surprise at seeing two strangers gazing intently at the artist's house. Morland looked at them earnestly—declared they were bailiffs, who certainly wanted him—and ordered the door to be bolted. Hassell having secured him at home, showed him the money for his work, and so dealt with him that the picture was completed, a landscape and six figures, one of his best productions, in six hours. He then paid him and relieved his apprehensions respecting the imaginary bailiffs—Morland laughed heartily. He considered it as a kind of pleasant interruption to the monotony of painting and drinking, that he was apprehended as a spy at Yarmouth, and subjected to a sharp examination. The drawings which he had made on the shores of the Isle of Wight were considered as confirmations of guilt; he was honoured, therefore, with an escort of soldiers and constables to Newport and there confronted by a bench of justices. At his explanation they shook their heads, laid a strict injunction upon him to paint and draw no more in that neighbourhood, and dismissed him. On another occasion, he was on his way from Deal, and Williams, the engraver, was his companion. The extravagance of the preceding evening had fairly emptied their pockets; weary, hungry and thirsty, they arrived at a small ale-house by the way-side; they hesitated to enter. Morland wistfully reconnoitred the house, and at length accosted the landlord—"Upon my life, I scarcely knew it: is this the Black Bull?" "To be sure it is, master," said the landlord, "there's the sign." "Ay! the board is there, I grant," replied our way-farer, "but the Black Bull is vanished and gone.

I will paint you a capital new one for a crown.” The landlord consented and placed a dinner and drink before this restorer of signs, to which the travellers did immediate justice. “ Now, landlord,” said Morland, “ take your horse, and ride into Canterbury—it is but a little way—and buy me proper paint and a good brush.” He went on his errand with a grudge, and returned with the speed of thought, for fear that his guests should depart in his absence. By the time that Morland had painted the Black Bull, the reckoning had risen to ten shillings, and the landlord reluctantly allowed them to go on their way; but not, it is said, without exacting a promise that the remainder of the money should be paid with the first opportunity. The painter, on his arrival in town, related this adventure in the Hole-in-the-Wall, Fleet Street. A person who overheard him, mounted his horse, rode into Kent, and succeeded in purchasing the Black Bull from this Kentish Boniface for ten guineas.

A bailiff, more subtle than his brethren, succeeded in arresting Morland. Fallen as he was, and discovered by the officer wallowing in a sty of filth and debauchery, his talents still found him friends, by whose recommendation and influence he obtained the Rules of the Bench. “ This ill-fated artist,” says Hassell, “ seemed to have possessed two minds—one, the animated soul of genius, by which he rose in his profession—and the other, that debased and grovelling propensity, which condemned him to the very abyss of dissipation.” In his new abode of misery—among the wreck of proud fortunes and high hopes—in the company of some

whom prodigality had utterly ruined, and of others who had only retired hither that they might live in affluence in spite of their just creditors—Morland was found by Hassell; he was not only content, but, like Tam o' Shanter in his glory, conceived himself victorious over all the ills of life. Even here he could jest and revel, indulge the wildest whims, and luxuriate in oddities and caprices.

Even amidst misery and recklessness like this, the spirit of industry did not forsake him, nor did his taste or his skill descend with his fortunes. One day's work would have purchased him a week's sustenance; yet he laboured every day, and as skilfully and beautifully as ever. His favourite companion in his retreat was a waterman, whom, by way of distinction, Morland called “My Dicky,” and Dicky was now the established vender of his pictures. If chance detained the purchaser of a bespoke painting beyond the time he promised to send for it, “My Dicky” was instantly despatched with it to the pawnbroker's. Dicky once carried a picture wet from the easel, with a request for the advance of three guineas upon it. The pawnbroker paid the money; but in carrying it into the room his foot slipped, and the head and foreparts of a hog were obliterated. The money-changer returned the picture with a polite note, requesting the artist to restore the damaged part. “My Dicky!” exclaimed Morland, “an that's a good one! but never mind!” He reproduced the hog in a few minutes, and said, “There! go back and tell the pawnbroker to advance me five guineas more upon it; and if he wont, say I shall proceed against

him ; the price of the picture is thirty guineas." The demand was complied with.

For Spencer of Bow Street, he painted several pictures ; one of the best was a straw-yard ; it had evidently cost him some pains, and he was no lover of minute work. He had introduced accordingly a raven seated on a straw-rack, and written on the rail under its feet, " No more straw-yards for me, G. Morland." The multitude of his orders induced him to neglect the finishing of many of his pictures, and the purchasers, glad to get them as they were, employed some second-rate hand to glaze up the foreground ; " but this," observes Hassell, " was confined to picture dealers, whose skill lay in supplying half-worn landscapes with new skies, and in cracking and varnishing new historical pictures to produce the appearance of antiquity." His common price, when in confinement, was " four guineas per day with his drink ;" and his employer sat down beside him telling pleasant stories and pouring out liquor till the time expired. It often required some skill to obtain a good day's work, for the glass was apt to be in his fingers in the morning before the pencil, and he continued to handle both alternately till he had painted as much as he pleased, or till the liquor got the better, when he claimed his wages, and business closed for the day.

He had no wish, however, to be distinguished as a resident in the realm of durance : taking advantage of the liberty of a day-rule in term time, he borrowed a horse—rode from house to house among his friends in the country round London—

contradicted boldly the story of his imprisonment — returned to town at the spur, and exhibited himself at every low pot-house on his way to the Rules. His vanity soared not beyond the present moment; to make a good passing impression was his chief aim; and while his money lasted, he was sure of success among those whose applause he valued. Though well-descended, he regarded that matter little, and would rather have had the laugh of a pot-house on his side than all the emblazonments of heraldry. In his earlier and better days, a solicitor informed him that he was heir to a baronet's title, and advised him to assert his claim. I know not whether there was any real foundation for this lawyer's story. "Sir George Morland!" however, said the painter, "It sounds well, but it wont do. Plain George Morland will always sell my pictures, and there is more honour in being a fine painter than in being a fine gentleman."

When the Insolvent Debtors' Act at length restored him to liberty — he was almost past the power of enjoying it. His constitution was ruined, and his personal character was sunk into general contempt. No one would associate with him but the meanest of mankind, nor did he wish this otherwise. In his thirty-ninth year, the palsy struck him. He recovered partially, but would often fall back senseless in his painting chair, and sometimes sink into sleep with his palette and brush in his hand. His left hand was so much affected, that he could no longer hold the implements of his profession. He was not, however, dismayed; he made drawings in pencil and in chalk, tinted them lightly, still enriched the

country with works at once bold, original and striking, and seemed to set want and disease at defiance. But the swiftest runner is soonest at the end of his journey. Morland was carried for debt to a spunging-house in Air Street, and to strengthen his courage on the loss of his liberty, swallowed an unusual quantity of spirits, which, instead of stupefaction, produced fever. Atwell, the keeper of the house, became alarmed, and applied to his friends for assistance : their sympathy, if exerted—of which there is no proof—came too late ; the powers of life were exhausted, and he died, after a brief illness, in utter wretchedness and penury, in the fortieth year of his age. His wife, from whom he had been separated for some time, in consequence of family feuds, survived him only a few days.

Morland had a look at once sagacious and sensual, and the same friends who compared his forehead to that of Napoleon, represent him as vain and irritable, fretful and vindictive. His character as a man was essentially vulgar, and he seemed insensible to shame. He loved all kinds of company save that of gentlemen ; it gave him pain to imitate the courtesies and decencies of life, and he disliked accordingly all those whose habits required their observance. He married without being in love and treated his wife with carelessness, because he was incapable of feeling the merits of modesty or domestic worth. He had fits of profuse generosity and capricious affection ; but folly and grossness were his familiar companions.

As an artist Morland's claims to regard are high and undisputed. He is original and alone ; his

style and conceptions are his own ; his thoughts are ever at home—are always natural—he extracts pleasing subjects out of the most coarse or trivial scenes, and finds enough to charm the eye in the commonest occurrence. He never paints above the most ordinary capacity, and gives an air of truth and reality to whatever he touches. He has taken a strong and lasting hold of the popular fancy; not by ministering to our vanity, but by telling plain and striking truths. He is the rustic painter for the people ; his scenes are familiar to every eye, and his name is on every lip. Painting seemed as natural to him as language is to others, and by it he expressed his sentiments and his feelings and opened his heart to the multitude. His gradual descent in society may be traced in the productions of his pencil ; he could only paint well what he saw or remembered ; and when he left the wild sea-shore and the green-wood side for the hedge ale-house and the Rules of the Bench, the character of his pictures shifted with the scene. Yet even then his wonderful skill of hand and sense of the picturesque never forsook him. His intimacy with low life only dictated his theme—the coarseness of the man and the folly of his company never touched the execution of his pieces. All is indeed homely—nay, mean—but native taste and elegance redeem every detail. To a full command over every implement of his art, he united a facility of composition and a free readiness of hand perhaps quite unrivalled.

His pictures were mostly produced under the influence of intoxication, and the strong stimulant of immediate payment; they were painted in the

Worm

terror of want, and in the presence of the sordid purchaser, who risked five guineas in a venture for twenty—yet they want nothing which art can bestow, or the most fastidious eye desire. Such was the precious coin with which this unfortunate man paid for gin, obtained the company of the scum and feculence of society and purchased patience from his creditor, or peace from the tipstaff. The annals of genius record not a more deplorable story than Morland's.

---

M. MOL.



## EDWARD BIRD.

---

EDWARD BIRD was born at Wolverhampton, on the 12th day of April, 1772. His father, a clothier by trade, was a man of sense and information, and gave him a fair education. His mother watched over him—for he was a weakly child—with the most anxious solicitude. When very young—the family tradition says three or four years old—he began to sketch. He would stand on a stool, chalk outlines on the furniture, and say, with childish glee, as he eyed his labours, “ Well done, little Neddy Bird ! ” He would be up with the dawn to draw figures upon the walls, whch he called French and English soldiers, and was continually in disgrace with the servant maids of his father’s house, who had to make use of their mops and scrubbing-brushes after those early risings.

He was privately encouraged in these pursuits by his eldest sister, now Mrs. Baker ; his first box of colours was purchased with her pocket-money —long hoarded for that purpose: and after he had risen to distinction, “ Sarah,” he would sometimes say, “ I must thank you for my being an artist.” Nor were his talents in those childish days unfelt by his father ; but remote from collections of paintings, unacquainted with the fame

they bring, and their influence with the world, the worthy clothier never thought of his son becoming a painter by profession, and regarded it as at best a pleasing but unprofitable calling. His first attempt worthy of notice dates in his fourteenth year—this was the imaginary interview between the Earl of Leicester, and the daughters whom Miss Lee has conferred on Mary Queen of Scots, in her novel of “The Recess.” It is now in the house of the artist’s widow.

When his father saw that his love of drawing and sketching was incurable, he began to grow anxious to turn it to some account, but could think of nothing better than apprenticing him to a maker of tea-trays—these accordingly it became the boy’s business to ornament and embellish. Birmingham then, as now, sent over the world many productions of domestic usefulness, which require not only skill of hand, but good taste and some fancy. On such things Bird first tried his pencil, and was soon distinguished above his fellow workmen for the neatness and beauty of his embellishments. Of this there is strong proof: long after, when his name was in the ranks of acknowledged genius, he was on a tour in France with several companions, and at Boulogne drank tea off a beautiful tray which excited their notice and praise. Bird looked at it and smiled; when they had recommenced their journey, one of his friends said, “I did not think they could have made such trays in France.” “It was not made here,” said Bird, “it was made in Birmingham, for I painted it.” One of the party was with difficulty restrained from turning back and buy-

ing it. Works of this nature, however, are, in a great measure, produced by a kind of mechanical process, in which genius claims little share. The daily reproduction of the same shapes and the same ornaments is but a wearisome task. To dedicate the golden hours of his life to gather wealth for the benefit of some manufacturer, was the original curse of Bird's condition, and he no sooner had the sense to perceive this, than he found courage necessary for setting himself free.

When his indentures expired, very advantageous offers were made to induce him to continue with the "trade :" but he refused them all, and, probably without any defined plan of conduct for future life, resigned a connexion which, with talents infinitely below his, many could have made highly lucrative.

Bird had long felt that yearning after distinction which genius ever feels ; he had improved his knowledge in the nature and use of colours ; his eye was already familiar with the human form, and his mind stored with those images of social humour and fire-side affection in which his strength lay. Of nature as he felt it, and of manners and passions, he had produced many sketches with the pencil—some he had tried to make permanent in oil ; and his confidence was daily increasing with his skill.

It was to the advantage of his art that he was thus self-instructed—for his genius was not of that powerful and self-relying order which gains much and loses nothing in the lecture-room, and the mechanical workshop attached to academies. The routine of a regular education in art would

probably have tamed down the gentle fire with which nature had endowed his bosom to a very insignificant spark.

Though Bird listened to the call of ambition, he was a wise and prudent man, and obeyed it but in part. He relinquished all connection with Birmingham and her teaboads, and, removing to Bristol, commenced a drawing-school. During the intervals of instruction, he sketched, designed, and painted, with all his early ardour, and with success such as follows patient self-discipline. He by and by thought so well of his works, that he ventured to show some of them to his friends, and amongst others to Mr. Murphy, an artist of taste and feeling, who liked them so much that he advised their being exhibited. To this Bird was averse for some time, but he at last consented to send two to the Bath Exhibition. It was necessary that a price should be named; the painter wrote down ten guineas each: his friend, with a better sense of their merit, wrote down thirty; and they found ready purchasers. This was in 1807, when Bird was in his thirty-fifth year. His sketch-books, says Mr. Murphy, were at that time filled with subjects fit to expand into paintings, and contained scenes of all kinds, serious and comic. They were marked by an original spirit, and showed a natural skill in grouping. The Interior of a Volunteer's Cottage was the subject of one of his works; and Clowns dancing in an Ale-house another. The threats of a French invasion had

“ Brought the freeman’s arm to aid the freeman’s laws.”

and Bird had the bayonet of a volunteer at that time in his hands. He was surrounded by a growing family. Fame and money were both desirable, and they were both obtained. Art cannot be followed without incurring expense; and the very reputation which genius acquires is a tax upon the pocket by bringing friends and strangers. Our painter's heart opened with his fortune: he was never a profuse, but always a very liberal man.

His first successful work, if we measure success by the applause of the world, was called "Good News." Some of his earlier pictures, I have heard good judges say, were of higher merit—and this is not unlikely; it seldom happens that the first original work which genius produces seizes the attention of mankind: it is considered by many as the lucky hit of an ordinary mind, and passed by till it is recalled to notice by a continuation of works from the same hand. "The Choristers Rehearsing" and "The Will" followed, and received equal praise, and, what was not less fortunate, obtained purchasers of high distinction: his present Majesty bought the first, and added judicious commendation to liberal payment; and the other was purchased by the late Marquis of Hastings. The Royal Academy soon afterwards conferred honour on themselves by enrolling our self-taught artist among their number.

His next work was his most poetical, and decidedly his best one. This is a representation of the Field of Chevy Chase on the day after the battle. It is painted in the mournful spirit with which the glorious old ballad concludes, and can-

not well be looked on without tears. These are the words embodied :

“ Of fifteen hundred Englishmen  
Went home but fifty-three;  
The rest were slaine in Chevy Chase  
Under the greenewoode tree.

Next day did many widows come  
Their husbands to bewayle ;  
They washed their wounds in brinish tears,  
But all would not prevayle.

Theyr bodyes bathed in purple blood  
They bare with them awaÿ ;  
They kist them dead a thousand times  
Ere they were cladd in clay.”

Of this heroic ballad, which Sir Philip Sydney said roused him like the sound of a trumpet, and which Ben Jonson affirmed was well worth all his dramas, the people of England are great admirers, and amongst the peasantry of the south it is almost the only one known. When they saw a painting which gave a life-like and touching image of a scene often present to the fancy, they were loud in its praise. Lady Percy is, with perfect propriety, made a visitor of the fatal field : she appears in deep agony beside the body of her lord. The old Minstrel thought proper to slay Percy by the spear of Sir Hugh Montgomery, and we appeal to history in vain against the poet’s decision. The gentle Kate of Shakespeare, who said to Hotspur, in his interview with Glendower, “ Lie still, thou thief, and hear the Welch lady sing,” had that sorrowful duty to perform at the battle of Shrewsbury, stricken many years after Otter-

bourne. This exquisite piece, which should have been purchased by some wealthy Douglas or Percy, was bought for 300 guineas by the Marquis of Stafford; while Mr. (now Sir Walter) Scott acquired the original sketch. The same munificent nobleman purchased Bird's next picture, the Death of Eli, for 500 guineas; and the British Institution added their testimony to its merits, by presenting the painter with their premium, amounting to £315.

Concerning the picture of the Death of Eli a curious story was circulated. Bristol long endured the reproach of parsimony both in prose and verse. Two English poets have expressed themselves with no measured bitterness of spirit concerning the sordid spirit of its merchants. Thus sings Richard Savage:

“ Upstarts and mushrooms; proud, relentless hearts;  
 Thou blank of sciences! thou dearth of arts!  
 Such foes as learning once was doomed to see,  
 Huns, Goths and Vandals, were but types of thee.”

And Robert Lovell is equally severe;

“ No mild urbanity attracts the sight,  
 No arts of skill or elegant delight;  
 But sordid wealth inspires the general cry,  
 And speeds the step and sharps the eager eye;  
 Foul as their streets, triumphant Meanness sways,  
 And grovelling as their mud-compelling drays;  
 Discordant sounds compose the Babel hum,  
 'Tis—how goes sugar? what's the price of rum?  
 What ships arrived? and, how are stocks to-day?  
 Who's dead? who's broken? and, who's run away?”

If such reproaches were ever due, they are so no

longer: Bristol has now her literary and scientific Institutions, and can point to many individuals of the most refined manners as well as the most generous liberality among her citizens. Touched somewhat, however, with the spirit described in Lovell's verses, three gentlemen of that city subscribed 100 pounds each, and commissioned, as it is called, a picture from the pencil of Bird. He painted the Death of Eli. The lucky proprietors sold it for 500 guineas; and, inspired with this, perhaps, unexpected profit, clubbed their hundreds again and waited on the painter with a fresh commission. But he had no wish to have his brains sucked at that rate, and declined their proposal. The meaning of these citizens in their first offer was kindly; they wished to inspire the artist with a proper confidence, and made remuneration certain; but they could not resist the temptation of gain. They ought to have paid Bird the whole sum which they received, and not sought to enrich themselves under pretence of friendship. But neither the satire of poets nor individual parsimony must conceal the fact that Bristol took an affectionate interest in his prosperity, and that he found many friends and patrons amongst her citizens.

Business about this time took Bird to his native town. He was personally recognized by many, and received with an enthusiasm which would have been creditable to a place of higher pretensions. His early companions gathered about him, and he made them cordially welcome. Many of those persons survive, and they all, and of their own accord, when his name is mentioned, speak

first of the active kindness of his heart, and then of the early indications of his talents. "I knew Ned Bird, Sir," said one of those humble friends, "when he was a boy at school; he never thought of himself; he would give the one half of his dinner to a beggar-woman and the other to a lame soldier, and fast upon his lesson." Nor had increase of years hardened his heart. One night, as he was on his way to his lodging, a woman ran wildly out of a door, crying "My child! my child!" Bird went into her house, and finding one of her children in strong convulsions, instantly brought a physician. "Look to the boy," said Bird, "and look also to the mother—she seems to need it much: I will pay for all." He returned next day, gave the poor widow a present of money, and when the child—which recovered only for a short time—died, he buried it at his own expense.

On his return to Bristol he recommenced his studies. His chief merit as an artist lay in natural and touching representations of homely and social things: history, either profane or sacred, required a spirit more in unison with the magnificent and the majestic, and an imagination of a more heroic order. He had *seen* the living nature which the former requires, and had taken frequent sittings: he had to *conceive* the nature which belongs to the latter, and in that rare quality he was found deficient.

His picture of "Good News" is a happy performance. The group which he assembled in the little ale-house has no doubt recalled similar scenes to all who have observed it. "The Blacksmith's Shop," an early painting of much promise,

was touched with the same spirit of social glee ; and the “Country Auction” is ranked by many as one of his cleverest pictures. The sound of the auctioneer’s hammer has called together a motley crowd, all anxious to bid for articles, and all bidding in character. An old grey-headed peasant has bought a large Bible ; his son-in-law hesitates between a punch-bowl and a cradle ; and his daughter sees nothing but the glitter of a tea-table service. A cautious gamekeeper and a bustling butcher are contending for a fowling-piece. A little girl has placed a burnished cullender above her curls, and eyes a mirror with much satisfaction ; while a gaping crowd of rustic connoisseurs are examining, with all the empty sagacity of a committee of taste, into the merits of an old daubing about to be exposed to sale. The colouring of the whole is mellow and harmonious.

Nor was he less skilful in subjects where the interest was confined to a single figure with little action. When he happened to meet an original-looking personage, young or old, his practice was to make a rude sketch on the spot—return to his study—assign to the figure some characteristic employment—expand it upon the canvass, and give it all the charm of colouring. He painted such works with astonishing rapidity : the picture existed complete in his mind, and an effort of art and memory reproduced it. During the stormy season of 1812 he was in London—found a famishing match-girl in the street—painted her in character in three days, and sold the work for thirty guineas. An old man seeking alms came across his way ; of him too he took a character-

istic likeness—half real and half imaginative, and with equal success. Accurate copies of nature he disliked : he took a poetic license with his subjects ; he had a happy knack in combination, and formed clever and consistent groups out of very discordant materials. "He could," said one of his admirers, "extract delight and joy out of any thing : I mean personally as well as with his pencil." "The Gipsey Boy," "The Young Recruit," "Meg Merrilies," "Game at Put," and various other paintings are all instances of his skill in adapting living life to the purposes of art. In this respect he resembled Opie. When one of his friends congratulated him upon the rapidity with which he dashed off his lesser, but his happier works, Bird said, "Yes, I can do them quickly; but it will not do to tell the world how soon I can paint such things." They who believe that what is done well cannot have been done quickly, are often mistaken.

The reputation of these paintings recalled public attention to his earlier productions, and "The Village Politicians," a cabinet picture, and "The Poacher," in six scenes, came out of obscurity. In these six pictures he conducts a peasant from his happy fireside through the varied fortunes of a poacher's life : seeking for game with his companion ; carrying it home to his wife and children ; selling it by lamp-light to the guard of a coach ; betrayed by his comrade ; admonished by a clergyman in prison ; and restored to his family an amended man with a resolution to be wise in future. I fear the poacher's career seldom terminates in a manner so pleasant to contemplate.

Sometime during the year 1813, Bird obtained the notice of the Princess Charlotte, who, young as she was, perceived the true native excellence of his works, and expressed a wish to see the artist. He was introduced, accordingly, at Warwick House, and was charmed, as all were, by the grace and kindly dignity of her manners. Encouraged by her courtesy, which had no chilling stateliness about it, he spoke readily and well, and acquitted himself so cleverly that her Royal Highness took an opportunity of saying to Mr. Murphy, who introduced him, "Mr. Bird is a very well-bred man—he has a natural politeness about him." The Princess promised him her support, and appointed him her painter, on which he made her a present of a work he had lately finished—"The Surrender of Calais." This was a favourite production, and he desired, very properly, to place it in the best company: alas! in that enviable situation it was not long to remain. That sad event happened which brought tears to all eyes, and of which one of our best poets has so mournfully sung.

" In its summer pride arrayed  
Low our Tree of Hope is laid!  
Low it lies;—in evil hour,  
Visiting the bridal bower,  
Death hath levelled root and flower;  
Windsor! in thy sacred shade,  
This the end of pomp and power!  
Have the rites of death been paid;  
Windsor! in thy sacred shade  
Is the Flower of Brunswick laid!"

On the death of our painter, his widow wished

to exhibit his works, and applied to Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg for a loan of "The Surrender of Calais :" the Prince did more than was asked, or expected, or indeed wished—he presented the painting to Mrs. Bird accompanied by a donation of an hundred pounds.

During one of his visits to London, Bird sat for his bust to Chantrey ; and the writer of this very imperfect account had thus many opportunities of conversing with him. He said he had no regular system of study ; he painted or sketched just as it suited him, and when once he had sat resolutely down to his easel, it was no easy thing to make him quit it. The subject once settled, he generally painted fast, and when fastest, best. He wrought much by candle-light, and in this manner he painted his *Death of Eli*. At this time Mr. Chantrey was busied with one of his cleverest works—the figure of Lady Louisa Russell—a child fondling a bird in her bosom, and standing on tip-toe with delight. As the sculptor was anxious to have it ready for the approaching Exhibition, he stuck a candle in the front of his hat, took a chisel in his hand, and laboured at the statue during the evenings. On one or more of those occasions, Bird was his companion. The light in the sculptor's hat glimmered as he moved his head amongst busts and groups, and statues—some emerging from the block, some rough-hewn, and others fully finished. The singular scene took the painter's fancy, and he resolved to make a picture of it. I wish he had finished this very original design : he left it sketched in oil. Chantrey appears in the act of carving one of the hands of the figure, sur-

rounded by his other works, over which there is shed a partial illumination. When the bust of Bird was finished, Skirving of Edinburgh, an artist of some talent and more eccentricity, paid the gallery of the sculptor a visit. He fixed his eye on the bust of the painter and said to the person who showed it, "Well—and who is that?" "It is Bird—Bird of Bristol." "Bird! what strange *bird* is he?" "He is an eminent painter." "Painter! and what does he paint?" "Ludicrous subjects, sir." "Ludicrous subjects! have you sat?" Upon this the other answered, "He has had one sitting; but when he heard that a gentleman with a white hat, and who wore no neckcloth, had arrived from the North, he said, 'Go, go—I know of a subject more ludicrous still: Mr. Skirving is come.'"

These visits to London, and his admiration of the historical pictures of the great painters, wrought a sore change on Bird: he forsook that style of art natural to his feelings, and dedicated his pencil to far other aspirations. He became affected with a kind of Scripture mania. He thought only of sublime passages in the Bible, and scenes of religious tragedy which the Reformation furnished. The fortitude of Job, the Death of Saphira, the Crucifixion, and the Burning of Ridley and Latimer, are amongst his latter works: they found admirers and purchasers. There is considerable talent in these paintings and some pathos; but they are deficient in that regal loftiness of look which the subjects require, and without which merely clever works are but processions of puppets. Our Redeemer's Atonement had already

been painted by higher hands, and the Martyrdom of the Bishops is a subject too horrible for any genius to render acceptable.

Those works having failed to yield fame to the artist in proportion to the toil they cost him, he filled up the measure of his sorrow by attempting what I may call the Political style of art. The times in which Bird lived teemed with events of vast importance : kings and thrones appeared and disappeared like figures in a disturbed dream ; and the splendid sun of Napoleon was setting as it rose, in blood. We all remember, and many of us witnessed, the departure of Louis XVIII. from his English exile for Paris. The painter had awakened a deep interest by his Surrender of Calais : he probably imagined that the further he came down the stream of national story, the interest of the subject would increase ; and in an evil hour for his own happiness, he resolved to paint the Embarkation of the French King and his attendants.

Of this work—which proved to be his last—Bird soon made the sketch, and all that he wanted was the likenesses of certain important personages. From Louis himself and his courtiers—men who, having suffered from oppression, had learned to be merciful—he received polite and kind attention. The old King praised the generous English, and the Duchess of Angouleme spoke highly to the honour of our ladies. But some of the nobles of his native land, whom he wished to introduce, were by no means so tractable to our artist ; who seems indeed to have been little skilled in the arts of courtly conciliation. They answered his appli-

cations very civilly, but day after day neglected to bestow on him the necessary sittings. His patience and at length his health failed him, after a sore trial of many months. The death of a son and a daughter, whom he tenderly loved, pressed grievously about the same period upon his feelings: he grew peevish and dejected, and a drooping look and unsteady step began to give notice that his days were numbered.

It is painful to think that the sensitive feelings of a man of genius should have been at the mercy of people thus unconscious or neglectful of its claims; but it is still more painful to think that he dedicated his time to processions and pageants, in which the likenesses of such ephemeral personages were necessary to his purpose. Bird slowly sunk under the pressing misery of hope deferred, diplomatic excuses and courtly delays; and on the 2d day of November, 1819, felt no longer the insolence of office. He died in the forty-eighth year of his age, and was buried in the cloisters of Bristol Cathedral.

Three hundred gentlemen of Bristol joined in the funeral procession of their favourite painter, and when the grave received his remains they were so much affected with the sight of his son—a child of seven years old, who was there as chief mourner—that they requested leave to bear the expense of the interment. This Mrs. Bird, with modesty and good feeling, declined. A colder tale is, however, told, and even credited far from Bristol. Those three hundred gentlemen, it is said, obtained, with much intreaty, Mrs. Bird's permission to bury her husband with all the ho-

nours of the city and at their own expense. The scene was splendid, and many were the external symptoms of public woe; but when all was over, the undertaker presented his bill to the widow of the painter. If this story be true, the sarcasms of Savage and Lovell are merciful and kind—but I believe it rests on no sufficient authority.

Edward Bird was in stature below the middle size, his eyes were expressive, his smile particularly winning, and his whole look full of intelligence. He was an admirer of truth, loved good order in his family, and kept strict discipline amongst his children, who loved and feared him. The air of rusticity which hovered about his person wore off as he became animated in company: there was much about him to please and even captivate, and, what all men reverence, a perfect sincerity of heart. Towards the close of his life his looks grew dark and melancholy; but this was less the fault of his mind than of his fortune; he felt that the world of fashion which he had worshipped was making its own return—neglecting while it praised, and spurning while it caressed him.

The early works of Bird have an original and unborrowed air, which mark an artist who thought for himself, and sought the materials of his pictures in the living world around him, rather than in the galleries of art. In these he was eminently happy, and his very success was the cause of his after-sorrow. A swarm of counsellors came round, who persuaded him that fame was the satellite of fashion, and induced him to forsake the modest path to permanent reputation, and follow the

will-o'-wisp of pageant-painting, which led to the slough of despond and to despair and the grave. Those who wish well to the fame of Edward Bird will speak of his paintings of humble life, and seek to forget not only these mistaken efforts of his declining hand, but even his historical productions, with the single exception of *Chevy Chase*.

---

---



## HENRY FUSELI.

---

**HENRY FUSELI**—so he chose to spell his name, though his fathers wrote it Fuessli—first saw the light, by all accounts save his own, in the year 1741, at Zurich; but as he seldom wished to think like other men, so he refused to be born according to tradition or register books, and taking up a little German memoir of himself, changed the date from 1741 to 1745, without adding either day or month. He always spoke of his age with reluctance. Once when pressed about it he peevishly exclaimed, “ How should I know? I was born in February or March—it was some cursed cold month, as you may guess from my diminutive stature and crabbed disposition.” He was the second of eighteen children: his name pertains to Switzerland—all by which that name is distinguished to England.

The father, John Gaspard Fuessli, obtained some fame as a portrait and landscape painter: his taste for poetry procured him the friendship of Kleist, Klopstock and Wieland; and from his History of the Artists of Switzerland, his more eminent son drew some of the materials for an enlarged edition of Pilkington’s Dictionary of Painters. He was

of the same family as that Matthias Fuessli, a painter, of Zurich, who studied in Venice, and died in 1665, of whom Henry gives this brief character:—"His extensive talent was checked by the freaks of an ungovernable fancy—his subjects in general were battles, towns pillaged, conflagrations, and storms." There is a kindred likeness here. The maiden name of Henry's mother was Elizabeth Waser; he loved to speak of her, and attributed much of his knowledge to her instructions—she died when he was eighteen years old. His father, a scholar and an artist, had probably experienced some of the sorrows common to both characters, and, desirous that his son should at least have bread, proposed to educate him for the church. The wayward temper of the boy, and his already enthusiastic love of painting, opposed strong obstacles to this sensible plan, and the father, with much of his own wilfulness of spirit, resolved to enforce obedience. For a while he was successful. Henry made great progress in learning—having overleaped the first difficulties, he became an ardent devourer of the classics; but it was only or chiefly to find, in the poetry of Greece and Rome, vivid images of heroic life and daring flights of imagination.

The time which the school demanded was thus spent, by one who could do in minutes what would have cost his fellows hours; for the rest of the day he had other occupation. As soon as he was released from his class, he withdrew to a secret place to enjoy unmolested the works of Michael Angelo, of whose prints his father had a fine collection. He loved when he grew old to talk of

those days of his youth, of the enthusiasm with which he surveyed the works of his favourite masters, and the secret pleasure which he took in acquiring forbidden knowledge. With candles which he stole from the kitchen, and pencils which his pocket-money was hoarded to procure, he pursued his studies till late at night, and made many copies from Michael Angelo and Raphael, by which he became familiar thus early with the style and ruling character of the two greatest masters of the art. The wild old work, called "Howleglas," caught his fancy, and he illustrated it with outlines, representing the ludicrous gambols of a motley jester—with the strange dances and mischievous tricks of fantastic imps and elves. The chief character in this strange book, which was once as popular in England as in Germany, is Howleglas himself—a personage corresponding with the Lord of Misrule of Scotland—so well described by Sir Walter Scott. "The mock dignitary was a stout-made under-sized fellow, whose thick-squab form had been rendered grotesque by a supplemental paunch well stuffed. He wore a mitre of leather with a front like a grenadier's cap, adorned with mock embroidery and trinkets of tin. This surmounted a visage the nose of which was the most prominent feature, being of unusual size, and at least as richly gemmed as his head-gear. His robe was of buckram, and his cape of canvass curiously painted and cut into open work. On one shoulder was fixed the painted figure of an owl, and he bore in the right hand his pastoral staff, and in the left a small mirror, having a handle to it, thus resembling a celebrated jester, whose

adventures translated into English were once extremely popular." The illustrations of Fuseli were in the spirit of the book, and it is a right facetious one—abounding with practical jokes, many of which the young artist very cleverly embodied. Etchings of these early attempts were afterwards published, and are now exceedingly rare; they are said not to be without merit, and to show, as the poet says, that "the boy is father of the man." His schoolfellows perceived his talents—some of them purchased his works—and he presently found himself with more money in his pocket than he knew well what to do with. The taste of our youth was decidedly in favour of whatever is staring and extravagant. He bought a piece of flame-coloured silk, had it made into a coat, and in this splendid attire marched up the streets of Zurich; but the laughter and mockery of his companions put him into such a passion that he soon threw off the garment and vowed never to be fine again.

With this two-fold taste for literature and art upon him, Fuseli was placed—I know not at what age—in the Humānity College of Zurich, of which two distinguished men, Bodmer and Breitenger, were professors. Here he became the bosom companion of that amiable enthusiast, Lavater, studied English, and conceived such a love for the works of Shakespeare, that he translated Macbeth into German. The writings of Wieland and Klopstock influenced his youthful fancy, and from Shakespeare he extended his affection to the chief masters in English literature. His love of poetry was natural, not affected—he practised at an early age the art which he admired through life, and some of

his first attempts at composition were pieces in his native language, which made his name known in Zurich.

Like some other youthful poets, he was also a reformer. In conjunction with Lavater he composed a pamphlet against a ruler in one of the bailiwicks, who had abused his powers, and perhaps personally insulted the two friends. The peasantry, it seems, conceiving themselves oppressed by their superior, complained and petitioned; the petitions were read by young Fuseli and his companion, who, stung with indignation at the tale of tyranny disclosed, expressed their feelings in a satire, which made a great stir in the city. Threats were publicly used against the authors, who were guessed at, but not known; upon which they distributed placards in every direction, offering to prove before a tribunal the accusations they had made. Nay, Fuseli actually appeared before the magistrates—named the offender boldly—arraigned him with great vehemence and eloquence, and was applauded by all and answered by none. Pamphlets and accusations were probably uncommon things in Zurich; in some other countries they would have dropt from the author's hands harmless or unheeded, but the united labours of Fuseli and Lavater drove the unjust magistrate into exile and procured remuneration to those who had suffered. Of this wonder-working production I can give no further account. It made Fuseli, in all likelihood, few friends; we are certain that it brought him enemies, who were powerful enough to make their anger be felt, and finally succeeded in inducing the young genius to quit Zurich.

With a reputation for scholarship, poetry, painting, and patriotism, and the degree of Master of Arts attached to his name, Fuseli bade farewell to his father's house, and travelled, in company with Lavater, to Berlin, where he placed himself under the care of Sulzer, author of the "Lexicon of the Fine Arts." His talents and learning obtained him the friendship of several distinguished men, and his acquaintance with English poetry, induced Professor Sulzer to select him as one well qualified for opening a communication between the literature of Germany and that of England. Sir Andrew Mitchell, British ambassador at the Prussian court, was consulted; and pleased with his lively genius, and his translations and drawings from Macbeth and Lear, received Fuseli with much kindness, and advised him to visit Britain. Lavater, who till now had continued his companion, presented him at parting with a card, on which he had inscribed in German, Do but the tenth part of what you can do. "Hang that up in your bed-head," said the physiognomist, "obey it—and fame and fortune will be the result."

If we trust the register of Zurich, Fuseli was in his twenty-second year when he appeared in England in 1763; but if we prefer his own statement as to the time of his birth, he was but eighteen—a tender age for obtaining the notice of ambassadors, and too young surely and inexperienced for opening a communication between two great nations in a matter of literature; yet his behaviour on arriving in this great Babylon may seem to countenance his own story. "When I stood in London," said he, "and considered that I did not know one soul in

all this vast metropolis, I became suddenly impressed with a sense of forlornness and burst into a flood of tears. An incident restored me. I had written a long letter to my father, giving him an account of my voyage and expressing my filial affection—now not weakened by distance—and with this letter in my hand, I inquired of a rude fellow whom I met, the way to the Post Office. My foreign accent provoked him to laughter, and as I stood cursing him in good Shakesperian English, a gentleman kindly directed me to the object of my inquiry." The embarrassment and tears thus described may strike many as suiting better the milkiness of eighteen than the firmer manhood of twenty-two.

After he reached London, we hear no more of the channel of communication which Professor Sulzer employed him to open between the literature of Britain and that of Germany. In what manner this was to be accomplished, I can find no account: he had common letters of credit to Coutts, the banker, and friendly introductions to Johnson, Millar, and Cadell, the booksellers, who all received him with kindness; but he was made acquainted with no man of influence or genius, and had to seek his way into such society as he might. His friends, the booksellers, obtained for him the situation of tutor to the son of some nobleman, whom he accompanied to Paris. This employment suited ill with the fiery impatience and untameable enthusiasm of Fuseli. He loved not to tell the name of his pupil, nor allude to the success of his labours, nor was he willing, it is said, to have the matter mentioned. His governorship is supposed

to have been short: and he returned to London to dedicate his pen to the daily toils of literature —to translations, essays, and critiques. Of such pieces he wrote nearly an hundred, but acknowledged none save a translation of Winklemann's work on painting and sculpture; and it required some nerve to make that acknowledgment, for the book, as has been mentioned in the life of Barry, advocates the doctrine that British genius is unequal to the task of making noble works of art—a notion which, however absurd, seems to have sometimes possessed Fuseli himself. The book which Barry so bitterly answered, excited no general attention here. It is a part of the English temper to listen to such fantastic assailants with exasperating indifference.

Fuseli afterwards tried his skill on more inflammable materials—he precipitated himself into the angry controversy then raging between Voltaire and Rousseau. “Fuseli,” said Bonnycastle to him one day after dinner, “you can write well—why don’t you write something?” “Something!” exclaimed the other, “you always cry write—Fuseli write!—blastation! what shall I write?” “Write,” said Armstrong, who was present, “write on the Voltaire and Rousseau *Ron*—there is a subject!” He said nothing—but went home and began to write. The enthusiasm of his hatred or his love enabled him to compose his Essay with uncommon rapidity, and he printed it forthwith, in the hope that it would fly abroad to exalt Rousseau, and confound Voltaire. “It had,” said one of his friends, “a short life and a bright ending.” The whole impression caught fire, and either

angry philosopher lived and died in ignorance whether the future professor of painting in England was his friend or his enemy. Fuseli was afterwards much ashamed of this production, and scarcely counted the man his friend who alluded to it. Armstrong, the poet, his constant associate, had once the boldness to tax him in company with having written it—Fuseli kindled up “like fire to heather set” and poured out his fury in both English and German. This calmed him—he then argued that his friend had no right to couple his name with such a work—but he did not deny it.

Though thus busied with tutorships and translations, he had not forgotten his early attachment to art. He found his way to the studio of Sir Joshua Reynolds, and submitted several of his drawings to the President’s examination, who looked at them for some time, and then said, “How long have you studied in Italy?” “I never studied in Italy—I studied at Zurich—I am a native of Switzerland—do you think I should study in Italy?—and, above all, is it worth while?” “Young man,” said Reynolds, “were I the author of these drawings, and were offered ten thousand a year *not* to practise as an artist, I would reject the proposal with contempt.” This very favourable opinion from one who considered all he said, and was so remarkable for accuracy of judgment, decided the destiny of Fuseli; he forsook for ever the hard and thankless *trade* of literature—refused a living in the church from some patron who had been struck with his talents—and addressed himself to painting with heart and hand.

The first effort of his pencil was “Joseph inter-

preting the Dreams of Pharaoh's chief Baker and Butler." I have been unable to learn how this work was executed or received; there was probably no contention for it among the patrons of art, since Johnson, the bookseller, became the purchaser. It hung in his house till it became cracked and faded, when Fuseli took it home to lay what he called "the villainous clutch of restoration upon it." The attempt was probably never made, and the picture was lost or destroyed. He had now lived eight years in England, and was in the thirtieth year of his age; his enthusiasm was unbounded, his learning great, his imagination of a high order, and much was expected from his zeal and talents, on whatever field he might ultimately fix them.

At this period his literary compositions were wonderfully free from the peculiarities which mark the writings of foreigners. They have much the air of being written with the scrupulous fastidiousness of one conscious of the sins most likely to beset him, and anxiously avoiding the enthusiasm as well as the idioms of the German style. Perhaps those for whom he wrote such desultory communications, had shown him with a wet pen how to sober down the poetic aspirations of his vein, and finding resistance unprofitable, he submitted the full-blown flowers of his fancy to the editorial scythe with composure. But when eminence in art brought him into notice, he resumed the original license of his pen, and hazarded freer thoughts and took bolder liberties with language. His German nature prevailed a little against his English education—and it cannot be denied that

it infused a dash of poetic fervour into his lectures and critical compositions.

His wit, and learning, and talent in art, gained him early admission to the company of the wealthy and the distinguished, and such was the varied power of his conversation that he never met a stranger without impressing him with a respect for his genius and a dread of his ridicule. His poetic talents were of no ordinary kind, and his poems, written in his native language, are deficient, I have heard, neither in force nor in fire—though occasionally deformed by bad taste. His attempts in English verse are rude and unmelodious—distinguished by harsh rugged vigour.

The sketches and drawings of Fuseli were of a higher order than the works of his pen, and as art speaks an universal language, they were free from those deformities which are so visible in his writings. They exhibited a deep poetic feeling, acquaintance with the poets and historians of old, and a perfect sense of the heroic action and sentiment which the noblest line of art requires. Armstrong, the poet, his friend and counsellor, was not insensible of their excellence, when he joined in persuading him to woo the muse of painting alone. He no sooner formed this resolution than he determined to visit Rome. Armstrong accompanied him, and both used to relate that whilst they were descanting on the glories of the Eternal City and the splendour of ancient sculpture and modern poetry, their reveries were interrupted by the sudden grounding of the vessel. This happened near Genoa, they took to their boats, landed in safety—quarrelled on the road to Rome, and sepa-

rated in no good mood at Florence. The poet went his own way, and Fuseli hastened to the capital of art.

He had from his boyhood admired Michael Angelo in engravings, and he adored him now in his full and undiminished majesty. It was a story which he loved to repeat, how he lay on his back day after day, and week succeeding week, with upturned and wondering eyes, musing on the splendid ceiling of the Sistine Chapel—on the unattainable grandeur of the Florentine. He sometimes, indeed, added, that such a posture of repose was necessary for a body fatigued like his with the pleasant gratifications of a luxurious city. He imagined, at all events, that he drank in as he lay the spirit of the sublime Michael, and that by studying in the Sistine, he had the full advantage of the mantle of inspiration suspended visibly above him. The flighty imagination of Fuseli required a soberer master; the wings of his fancy were a little too strong sometimes for his judgment, and brought upon him the reproach of extravagance—an error so rare in British art that it almost becomes a virtue. He was no idle votary, for he strove to imitate; he was no ignorant admirer, for he thus praises his great master.

“ Sublimity of conception, grandeur of form, and breadth of manner, are the elements of Michael Angelo’s style. By these principles he selected or rejected the objects of imitation. As painter as sculptor, as architect, he attempted—and, above any other man, succeeded—to unite magnificence of plan and endless variety of subordinate parts with the utmost simplicity and breadth. His line

is uniformly grand; character and beauty were admitted only so far as they could be made subservient to grandeur; the child, the female, meanness, deformity, were by him indiscriminately stamped with grandeur. A beggar rose from his hand the patriarch of poverty; the hump of his dwarf is impressed with dignity; his women are moulds of generation; his infants teem with the man; his men are a race of giants. This is the "Terribil via" hinted at by Agostino Caracci, though perhaps as little understood by the Bolognese as by the blindest of his Tuscan adorers, with Vasari at their head. He is the inventor of epic painting in that sublime circle of the Sistine Chapel which exhibits the origin, progress, and final dispensation of Theocracy. He has personified motion in the groups of the Cartoon of Pisa; embodied sentiment in the monuments of St. Lorenzo; unravelled the features of meditation in the prophets and sybils of the Chapel of Sixtus; and in the Last Judgment, with every attitude that varies the human body, traced the master trait of every passion that sways the human heart. Though as sculptor he expresses the character of flesh more perfectly than all who came before or after him, yet he never submitted to copy an individual, Julio the Second only excepted, and in him he represented the reigning passion rather than the man. In painting, he contented himself with negative colour, and as the painter of mankind, rejected all meretricious ornament. The fabric of St. Peter, scattered into infinity of jarring parts by Bramanti and his successors, he concentrated, suspended the

cupola, and to the most complex gave the air of the most simple of edifices."

This character carries the image of the author's mind ; the style, however, is clearer, and the expression less complicated or obscure than was common with Fuseli. No unimaginative dauber ever hid his ignorance of anatomy under a redundancy of drapery, more effectually than this remarkable man could veil ordinary thoughts under colossal words. The reader will thank me for transcribing also the following portrait of Leonardo da Vinci.

"Leonardo da Vinci broke forth with a splendour which distanced former excellence; made up of all the elements which constitute the essence of genius; favoured by education and circumstances; all ear, all eye, all grasp; painter, poet, sculptor, anatomist, architect, engineer, chemist, mechanist, musician, man of science, and sometimes empiric, he laid hold of every beauty in the enchanted circle—but without exclusive attachment to one, dismissed, in her turn, each. Fitter to scatter hints than teach by example, he wasted life insatiate in experiment. To a capacity which at once penetrated the principle and real aim of art, he joined an inequality of fancy that at one moment lent him wings for the pursuit of beauty, and the next flung him on the ground to crawl after deformity: we owe him chiaro-scuro with all its magic; we owe him caricature with all its incongruities. His notions of the most elaborate finish and his want of perseverance were at least equal. Want of perseverance alone could make him abandon his Cartoon, destined for the great council chamber at Florence, of which the

celebrated contest of horsemen was but one group; for to him who could organize that composition, Michael Angelo himself ought rather to have been an object of emulation than of fear."

Fuseli seldom thought with sober feelings upon either art or literature, and he delighted to invest the objects of his love with the brightness of heaven —those of his hate with the hues of utter darkness. He poured out his admiration in words which he wished to thunder and lighten ; his irony stung like an adder, and his sarcasm cut like a two-edged sword. As he claims attention in writing as well as in painting, I shall quote a third passage, where his skill in the former art aided him in expressing his feelings concerning the latter.

"The inspiration of Michael Angelo was followed by the milder genius of Raphael—the father of dramatic painting — the painter of humanity : less elevated, less vigorous, but more insinuating ; more pressing on our hearts ; the warm master of our sympathies. What effect of human connexion —what feature of the mind, from the gentlest emotion to the most fervid burst of passion, has been left unobserved—has not received a characteristic stamp from that examiner of men ? Michael Angelo came to nature—nature came to Raphael—he transmitted her features like a lucid glass—unstained, unmodified. We stand with awe before Michael Angelo, and tremble at the height to which he elevates us. We embrace Raphael and follow him wherever he leads us. Perfect human beauty he has not represented. No face of Raphael's is perfectly beautiful—no figure of his, in the abstract, possesses the proportions which could raise

it to a standard of imitation : form to him was only a vehicle of character or pathos ; and to those he adapted it, in a mode and with a truth that leave all attempts at emendation hopeless. His invention connects the utmost stretch of possibility with the most plausible degree of probability, in a way that equally surprises our fancy, persuades our judgment, and affects our heart. His composition always hastens to the most necessary point as its centre, and from that disseminates—to that leads back as rays all secondary ones. Group, form, and contrast are subordinate to the event, and common-place is ever excluded. The line of Raphael has been excelled in correctness, elegance, and energy ; his colour far surpassed in tone, in truth, and harmony ; his masses, in roundness, and his chiaro-scuro in effect ; but, considered as instruments of pathos, they have never been equalled ; and in composition, invention, expression, and the power of telling a story, he has never been approached."

Of Correggio he writes with the same power and discrimination. "Another charm was yet wanting," he says, "to complete the round of art —harmony: it appeared with Antonio Laeti, called Correggio, whose works it attended like an enchanted spirit. The harmony and the grace of Correggio are proverbial: the medium which by breadth of gradation unites two opposite principles, the coalition of light and darkness by imperceptible transition, are the elements of his style. This inspires his figures with grace—to this their grace is subordinate : the most appropriate—the most elegant attitudes were adopted—rejected—

perhaps sacrificed to the most awkward ones, in compliance with this imperious principle : parts vanished, were absorbed, or emerged in obedience to it. This unison of a whole predominates over all that remains of him, from the vastness of his cupolas to the smallest of his oil pictures. The harmony of Correggio, though assisted by exquisite hues, was entirely independent of colour : his great organ was Chiaro-Scuoro, in its most extensive sense ; compared with the expanse in which he floats, the effects of Leonardi da Vinci are little more than the dying ray of evening, and the concentrated flash of Giorgione discordant abruptness. The bland central light of a globe, imperceptibly gliding through lucid demi-tints into rich reflected shades, composes the spell of Correggio, and affects us with the soft emotions of a delicious dream."

Such are the characters which Fuseli drew with his pen of those four illustrious artists. The calm dignity, the solemn grace and tranquil divinity of Raphael, affected him less than the vigorous, energetic, and startling productions of Michael Angelo. The works of the latter were indeed more akin to the fancy of Fuseli, which loved like a meteor to shine upon unpassable places, and light the darkness of that region which forms the border-land between sense and absurdity. The mental radiance which Raphael shed so largely upon his compositions was inferior, in the opinion of this new student in the grand style, to the muscular glory of his great rival. Fuseli had little sympathy with gentleness and repose : he thought there was no dignity without action—no sublimity without exaggeration. He fulfilled the injunctions of Rey-

nolds—he ate and drank and slept and waked upon Michael Angelo. By a wiser course of study he might have schooled down his imagination; but he shunned the calmer company of Correggio and Raphael to quaff wine from the cup of the Polyphe-mus of modern art. He lived in a species of intoxication—affected the dress and mimicked the manners of Michael—assumed the historic shoe, and would have preferred the sandal. In drawing and in sketching he tried to imitate his master's dashing energy and extravagance of breadth, which induced Piranesi to exclaim, “Fuseli—this is not designing, but building a man!” When time had mellowed his taste, and in his turn he had become an instructor, he continued to prefer that broad nervous freedom of hand, and held in derision all that was cautiously neat or timidly graceful. He would seize the chalks of the students, stamp with his tiny foot till they stared or smiled—cry “See!” and delineate a man in half the time and with a broader stroke than a tailor uses in chalking out a garment. Yet coarse as such hasty outlines seemed to the inexperienced, in the view of those acquainted with design, they contained the elements of the truest art, and presented such materials for study as none but the hand of a master could dash off.

Of his studies in the numerous galleries of Italy he has left a minute account. He refused to follow the common method of laboriously copying the chief pictures of the great masters, with the hope of carrying away their spirit as well as the image of their works. He sought to animate his own compositions by contemplating rather than tran-

scribing their's. To his sketches he added observations with his pen; they are rapturous about all that is lofty, nor are they deficient either in the shrewdness which penetrates, or the wisdom which weighs. He loved to dream along the road—to follow the phantasies of an unbridled imagination—to pen sarcastic remarks—sketch colossal groups, and would call out ever and anon, when some strange thought struck him, “ Michael Angelo ! ” His company was eagerly courted by all who wished to be thought wise or witty; and with the English gentry, who then, as now, swarmed in Rome, he formed friendships which were useful in after-life.

How Fuseli supported himself abroad during eight years of study, he has not told us; his family were respectable, not opulent; his attempts with the pen had enabled him to live without making his purse overflow, and as his paintings were few, it has been supposed that the income arising from his own exertions was but little. It is now ascertained that such was his winning way in conversation, and such even then the acknowledged powers of his pencil, that from English travellers alone he had at one time commissions to the amount of £1300. Some of his letters from Rome have a laconic brevity which amuses those whom they fail to inform; others breathe of a sadness of heart and depression of spirit, such as the sons of genius are commonly heirs to.

“ I am inexcusable, Madam,” he thus writes to Miss Moser. “ I know your letter by heart, and have never answered it: but I am often so very unhappy within, that I hold it a matter of remorse

to distress such a friend as Miss Moser with my own whimsical miseries :— they may be fancied evils, but to him who has fancy, real evils are unnecessary, though I have them too. All I can say is, that I am approaching the period which commonly decides a man's life with regard to fame or infamy : if I am distracted by the thought, those who have passed the Rubicon will excuse me, and you are amongst the number. Madam, your most obliged servant and friend—FUSELI."

In 1774 he sent to the British Exhibition a drawing of the Death of Cardinal Beaufort, and three years after, a Scene from Macbeth—both marked by much boldness and originality. His mind loved to range with Shakespeare and Milton—the Satan of the latter, majestic even in ruin, was a favourite study, and he imagined no one save himself could body him forth in all his terror and glory; the Tempest and the Midsummer Night's Dream contained images no less congenial, and he had already filled his portfolio with designs worthy of the wand of Prospero or the spells of Puck. His imagination—though he seemed not aware of it—was essentially Gothic ; his mind dwelt with the poetry and the superstitions of Christendom ; he talked about, but seldom drew, the gods and goddesses of Olympus.

In the year 1778 Fuseli left Italy with commissions for pictures in his pocket to a large amount ; commissions, most of which, I grieve to say it, were afterwards ungenerously withdrawn. Such fickle patrons are not uncommon in the history of British art—the meanness of the great, and the sordidness of the wealthy, pressed sorely upon Fuseli, soured

his temper, and brought on those fits of despondency which are the surest inheritance of the imaginative. He paid a visit to his native Zurich, and lived six months with his father, whom he loved tenderly. His elder brother, Rodolph, had settled in Vienna, and become librarian to the emperor, and his brother Caspar died in the prime of life, after having distinguished himself by several skilful compositions on entomology. Early in 1779 he left Zurich, to which he never returned, and came back to London with his mind strengthened in knowledge, and his hand improved in its cunning. With the reputation of an eight years' residence in Rome upon him, he commenced his professional career, and the beginning was auspicious.

Thus stood art at that time in England. Reynolds excelled all men in portraiture and wrought unrivalled and alone. Wilson and Gainsborough sufficed for the moderate measure of public demand in landscape. Barry and West shared between them the wide empire of religious and historic composition, and there was nothing left for Fuseli save the poetical. Nature had endowed him eminently for this field, and the nation showed symptoms of an awakening regard for it. No preceding painter had possessed himself of the high places of British verse. The enthusiasm for Milton, and especially for Shakespeare, was warmer and also more intelligent than at any former time ; and Fuseli was considered by himself and by many friends as destined to turn this state of feeling to excellent account.

The first work which proved that an original mind had appeared in England, was the "Night-

mare," exhibited in 1782. "The extraordinary and peculiar genius which it displayed," says one of his biographers, "was universally felt, and perhaps no single picture ever made a greater impression in this country. A very fine mezzotinto engraving of it was scraped by Raphael Smith, and so popular did the print become, that, although Mr. Fuseli received only twenty guineas for the picture, the publisher made five hundred by his speculation." This was a subject suitable to the unbridled fancy of the painter, and perhaps to no other imagination has the Fiend which murders our sleep ever appeared in a more poetical shape.

Though the *Nightmare* was the work which caught the public fancy most, the *Oedipus and his Daughters*—a work of a far higher order—was the first which he exhibited on his return from Rome. This is indeed a picture of singular power—full of feeling and terror. The desolate old man is seated on the ground, and his whole frame seems inspired with a presentiment of the coming vengeance of heaven. His daughters are clasping him wildly, and the sky seems mustering the thunder and fire in which the tragic bard has made him disappear. "Pray, Sir, what is that old man afraid of?" said some one to Fuseli, when the picture was exhibited. "Afraid, Sir," exclaimed the painter, "why afraid of going to hell!"

His rising fame—his poetic feeling—his great knowledge—and his greater confidence—now induced Fuseli to commence an undertaking worthy of the highest genius—The Shakespeare Gallery. An accidental conversation at the table of the nephew of Alderman Boydell, started, it is said,

the idea; and West, and Romney, and Hayley, shared with Fuseli in the honour. But to the mind of the latter, such a scheme had been long present; it dawned on his fancy in Rome, even as he lay on his back marvelling in the Sistine, and he saw in imagination a long and shadowy succession of pictures. He figured to himself a magnificent temple, and filled it, as the illustrious artists of Italy did the Sistine, with pictures from his favourite poet. All was arranged according to character. In the panels and accessaries were the figures of the chief heroes and heroines—on the extensive walls were delineated the changes of many-coloured life, the ludicrous and the sad—the pathetic and the humorous—domestic happiness and heroic aspirations—while the dome which crowned the whole exhibited scenes of higher emotion—the joys of heaven—the agonies of hell—all that was supernatural and all that was terrible. This splendid piece of imagination was cut down to working dimensions by the practised hands of Boydell, who supported the scheme anxiously and effectually. On receiving £500 Reynolds entered, though with reluctance, into an undertaking which consumed time and required much thought: but Fuseli had no rich commissions in the way—his heart was with the subject—in his own fancy he had already commenced the work, and the enthusiastic alderman found a more enthusiastic painter, who made no preliminary stipulations, but prepared his palette and began.

Shakespeare presented an entire world to the eye of art; and to embody the whole or any considerable portion of his visions, would demand a

combination of powers not to be hoped for. As might have been expected, Fuseli grappled with the wildest passages of the most imaginative plays; and he handled them with a kind of happy and vigorous extravagance, which startled common beholders.

The *Tempest*, the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *King Lear*, and *Hamlet*, suggested the best of the eight Shakespearian pictures which he painted, and of these, that from *Hamlet* is certainly the noblest. It is, indeed, strangely wild and super-human—if ever a Spirit visited earth, it must have appeared to Fuseli. The majesty of buried Denmark is no vulgar ghost such as scares the belated rustic, but a sad and majestic shape with the port of a god; to imagine this, required poetry, and in that our artist was never deficient. He had fine taste in matters of high import; he drew the boundary line between the terrible and the horrible, and he never passed it; the former he knew was allied to grandeur, the latter to deformity and disgust. An eminent metaphysician visited the gallery before the public exhibition; he saw the *Hamlet's Ghost* of Fuseli, and exclaimed, like Burns's rustic in Halloween, “Lord preserve me!” He declared that it haunted him round the room.

Two of these pictures merit a more detailed account—the *Infant Shakespeare*, and *Titania*. The first is a fine piece of imagination introductory to the series of paintings, and the other is scarcely less so, though professing only to embody a particular passage of the great poet. In the *Infant Shakespeare*, Tragedy is represented, a beautiful and mournful dame, nursing in her bosom the

young dramatist ; she seems exhausted by her maternal indulgence, and the child—his lips moist with milk and his eyes beaming with inspiration and health—appears anxious to quit her bosom for that of Comedy—a more youthful and gladsome lady, who with loose looks and looser attire—with laughing eyes and feet made to do nothing but dance, has begun to toy and talk with him. Around this group the painter has summoned the various characters which the poet afterwards created. Lady Constance is there with her settled sorrow—Lady Macbeth exhibits herself in that sleeping scene to which a Siddons has added terrors all her own ; the three weird sisters—those black and midnight hags—appear dim but well defined. Falstaff too is there, a hogshead of a man with a tun of wit : and Caliban, a strange creation—a connecting link between man and brute—comes grovelling forward to look at his creator. Over the whole glares Hamlet's Ghost, throwing a sort of supernatural halo upon all around. The mask of Othello lies in the robe of Tragedy, and Queen Mab and one of her merriest comrades are sporting in Shakespeare's cradle.

The Titania is more exclusively comic, and can be compared to nothing more aptly than to the Strolling Actresses of Hogarth—it overflows with elvish fun and imaginative drollery. It professes to embody that portion of the first scene in the fourth act where the spell-blinded queen caresses Bottom the weaver, on whose shoulders Oberon's transforming wand has placed an ass's head. Titania, a gay and alluring being, attended by her

#### THE BRITISH PAINTERS.

troop of fairies, is endeavouring to seem as lovely as possible in the sight of her lover, who holds down his head and assumes the air of the most stupid of all creatures. One almost imagines that her ripe round lips are uttering the well known words,—

“ Come, sit thee down upon this flowery bed,  
While I thy amiable cheeks do coy,  
And stick musk roses in thy sleek smooth head,  
And kiss thy fair large ears, my gentle joy.”

The rout and revelry which the fancy of the painter has poured around this spell-bound pair baffles all description. All is mirthful, tricksy, and fantastic. Sprites of all looks and all hues—of all “ dimensions, shapes, and mettles,”—the dwarfish elf and the elegant fay—Cobweb commissioned to kill a red-hipped humble bee on the top of a thistle, that Bottom might have the honey-bag—Pease-Blossom, who had the less agreeable employment of scratching the weaver’s head—and that individual fairy who could find the hoard of the squirrel and carry away his nuts—with a score of equally merry companions are swarming everywhere and in full employment. Pease-Blossom, a fairy of dwarfish stature, stands on tiptoe in the hollow of Bottom’s hand, endeavouring to reach his nose—his fingers almost touch, he is within a quarter of an inch of scratching, but it is evident he can do no more, and his new master is too much of an ass to raise him up.

The paintings which composed the Shakespeare Gallery were supplied by various hands;

the plan was new, and novelty seldom fails to attract the multitude; but the multitude cannot be supposed to have much sympathy with works of a purely poetic order. There must be a strong infusion of the grosser realities of life to secure extensive popularity: any rustic can feel the merits of John Gilpin, but what can such a person comprehend of the Pensero? Much as the Shakespeare Gallery was praised, its excellence therefore was not felt by the people at large. The superiority of Fuseli in poetic conception over all his compeers was however appreciated by the few, on whose approbation alone he placed any value.

Those pictures were followed by others, all of a poetic order—Dante's Inferno suggested the Francesca and Paolo—Virgil supplied him with Dido, from Sophocles he took Œdipus devoting his son, and from Boccaccio the Theodore and Honorio. Concerning this latter picture Fuseli used to say, “Look at it—it is connected with the first patron I had.” He then proceeded to relate how Cipriani had undertaken to paint for Horace Walpole a scene from Boccaccio's Theodore and Honorio, familiar to all in the splendid translation of Dryden, and, after several attempts, finding the subject too heavy for his handling, he said to Walpole, “I cannot please myself with a sketch from this most imaginative of Gothic fictions; but I know one who can do the story justice—a man of great powers, of the name of Fuseli.” “Let me see this painter of your's,” said the other. Fuseli was sent for, and soon satisfied Walpole that his imagination was equal to the task by painting a splendid picture. He entertained till the hour of

his death a regard for Cipriani. Those works were all marked by poetic freedom of thought and by more than poetic extravagance of action. They astonished many whom they could not please, and the name of Fuseli was spread over the island and heard of in foreign lands. He was elected an Associate of the Academy in 1788, and early in 1790 became an Academician—honours won by talent without the slightest co-operation of intrigue. His election was nevertheless unpleasant to Reynolds, who desired to introduce Bonomi the architect. Fuseli, to soothe the President, waited on him and said, “I wish to be elected an academician. I have been disappointed hitherto by the deceit of pretended friends—shall I offend you if I offer myself next election.” “Oh, no,” said Sir Joshua with a kindly air, “no offence to me; but you cannot be elected this time—we must have an architect in.” “Well, well,” said Fuseli, who could not conceive how an architect could be a greater acquisition to the Academy than himself—“Well, well, you say I shall not offend you by offering myself, so I must make a trial.” The result has been related in the life of Reynolds.

In the year 1788, he had taken a house in Queen Ann Street East, with a suitable gallery and studio, and married Sophia Rawlins. She proved a kind and faithful wife, who soothed him in moments of irritation, loved him warmly, and worshipped his genius. Higher birth and more delicate breeding might not have done more for him. She was handsome in youth, nor was she much faded when Opie painted her portrait. She was a woman of discretion too as well as of kindly

feelings, and had what ladies call “trials.” These must be described, as they are interwoven closely with the character of her husband.

At the table of Johnson, the bookseller, Fuseli was a frequent guest, and in all conversations that passed there was lord of the ascendant. There he met his friend Armstrong, who praised him in the journals, Wolcot, whom he hated, and Mary Wolstonecraft, who at the first interview conferred upon him the honour of her love. The French Revolution was at that time giving hopes to the young and fears to the old. Fuseli was slightly smitten : but the cap of liberty itself seemed to have fallen on the heart as well as the head of the lady; who conducted herself as if it were absurd to doubt that the new order of things had loosened all the old moral obligations, and that marriage was but one of those idle ceremonies now disposed of for ever by the new dispensation of Lepaux and his brethren. With such notions Mary Wolstonecraft cast bold eyes upon the Shakespeare of canvass. And he, instead of repelling, as they deserved, those ridiculous advances, forthwith, it seems, imagined himself possest with the pure spirit of Platonic love—assumed the languid air of a sentimental Corydon—exhibited artificial raptures, and revived in imagination the fading fires of his youth. Yet Mrs. Fuseli appears to have had little serious cause for jealousy in this mutual attachment.

“ Between the celebrated painter and herself, (says the able writer who afterwards married Mary Wolstonecraft,) there existed sentiments of genuine affection and friendship. She saw Mr. Fuseli fre-

quently; he amused, delighted, and instructed her. As a painter, she could not but wish to see his works, and consequently to frequent his house; she visited him; her visits were returned. Notwithstanding the inequality of their years, Mary was not of a temper to live upon terms of so much intimacy with a man of merit and genius without loving him. The delight she enjoyed in his society she transferred by association to his person. She had now lived for upwards of thirty years in a state of celibacy and seclusion, and as her sensibilities were exquisitely acute, she felt this sort of banishment from social charities more painfully than persons in general are likely to feel it. The sentiments which Mr. Fuseli excited in her mind taught her the secret to which she was in a manner a stranger. Let it not, however, be imagined, that this was any other than the dictate of a refined sentiment, and the simple deduction of morality and reason. It happened in the present case that Mr. Fuseli was already married; and in visiting at his house his wife became the acquaintance of Mary. Mary did not disguise from herself how desirable it would have been that the man in whom she discovered qualities calling forth all the strength of her attachment, should have been equally free with herself. But she cheerfully submitted to the empire of circumstances."

The coquetting of a married man of fifty with a tender female philosopher of thirty-one can never be an agreeable subject of contemplation; but it is probable that Fuseli felt no disposition to abandon his wife and his duty, however culpable he may have been in permitting the commencement

of this absurd flirtation. Mrs. Fuseli, meanwhile, regarded the philandering of these originals with no easy mind. One day, when she seemed to be in a towering passion, " Sophia, my love," said her sarcastic husband, " why don't you swear?—you don't know how much it would ease your mind."

To ease her own mind, Mary Wolstonecraft went to France in the year 1792. " One of her principal inducements to this step," says her husband and biographer, " related, I believe, to Mr. Fuseli. She had at first considered it as reasonable and judicious to cultivate what I may be permitted to call a Platonic affection for him, but she did not in the sequel find all the satisfaction in this plan which she had originally expected from it. It was in vain that she enjoyed much pleasure in his society and that she enjoyed it frequently. Her ardent imagination was continually conjuring up pictures of the happiness she would have found if fortune had favoured their more intimate union. She felt herself formed for domestic affection, and all those tender charities which men of sensibility have always treated as the dearest bond of human society. General conversation and society could not satisfy her; she felt herself alone as it were in the great mass of her species, and she repined when she reflected that the best years of her life were spent in this comfortless solitude. These ideas made the cordial intercourse of Mr. Fuseli, which had at first been one of her greatest pleasures, a source of perpetual torment to her. She conceived it necessary to snap the chain of this association in her mind, and for this purpose determined to seek a new climate and mingle in different scenes." It

would have been as well if Philosophy had kept her favourite daughter at home; but I shall lift the veil no further—those who wish to follow out the story of this strange person, may consult the pages of the gentleman who could not only admire, but marry her, and when she was no more, employ the pen, which wrote *Caleb Williams*, in a detailed narrative of her crazy and vicious career.

Fuseli sought refuge from the active affections of Miss Wolstonecraft, in the absorbing studies of a new and gigantic undertaking—this was the Milton Gallery of Paintings commenced in 1791, completed in 1800, and containing in all forty-seven pictures from the works of the illustrious poet. This magnificent plan originated with Fuseli, was countenanced by Johnson the bookseller, and supported by the genius of Cowper, who undertook to prepare an edition of Milton with translations of his Latin and Italian poems. The pictures were to be engraved and introduced as embellishments to the work. Of this task the poet thus writes to his friend Rose : “ You, who know how necessary it is for me to be employed, will be glad to hear that I have been called to a new literary engagement, and that I have not refused it. A Milton, that is to rival, and, if possible, exceed in splendour Boydell’s Shakespeare, is in contemplation, and I am in the editor’s office. Fuseli is the painter. My business will be to select notes from others, and write original notes : to translate the Latin and Italian poems and give a correct text.” Ill-health interfered between the poet and his task—the painter went to work with more than even his accustomed enthusiasm. It would appear, however, that Boy-

dell threw obstacles in the way, though of what kind I cannot guess. They are thus alluded to by Cowper in one of his letters. "As to Milton, the die is cast—I am engaged—have bargained with Johnson and cannot recede. This squabble, in the mean time, between Fuseli and Boydell does not interest me at all; let it terminate as it may, I have only to perform my job and leave the event to be decided by the combatants." If Boydell was displeased because Fuseli had preferred the offers of Johnson we may then suppose that the Shakespeare had been to him a profitable undertaking—men in business seldom dispute concerning works which are not marketable. The upshot was, that Boydell was vanquished or was pacified, and the work, which perhaps had never been seriously interrupted, went on.

To this high task the artist brought many high qualities; but when the doors of the Milton Gallery were opened to the world, it was seen that the genius of Fuseli was of a different order from that of Milton. To the severe serene majesty of the poet the intractable fancy of the painter had refused to bow; the awful grandeur of the realm of Perdition, and the sublime despair of its untameable Tenant, were too much for him—though he probably thought them too little. He could add fury to Moloch and malignancy to Beelzebub; but he fell below the character of terrible daring, enduring fortitude, and angelic splendour, which mark the arch-apostate of Milton. The most visible want is in that grave and majestic solemnity with which the poet has invested all that he has

touched ; and the chief excellences to be set against this prevailing defect, are a certain aërial buoyancy, and a supernatural glow of colour, which in some of these pieces fill the imagination of the observer, and redeem in so far the reputation of Fuseli.

Of the paintings which compose this gallery, The Lazar House is most admired by men of vertù : The rising of Satan at the touch of Ithuriel's Spear is the favourite with the multitude. In the first he showed fine taste and poetic tact, by omitting all which could excite disgust, and by giving a mental rather than a bodily image of the poet's meaning. In the latter he shows us our first parents asleep in all the lustre of innocence, and the discovered fiend starting up in his own likeness at the touch of the celestial spear. In the Lazar House he has handled a difficult subject with wonderful skill—in the other he has successfully shown the power which he possessed above all men of giving aërial motion to his supernatural creations. In the whole compass of art there is not a lovelier or more terrific scene than this—the naked and reposing loveliness of the new created pair, and the startled and louring looks of the audacious fiend as he rises “ like a pyramid of fire,” are blended into one strange but perfect harmony.

To image forth the undaunted fiend with horror plumed on his helm was no common task, but to give a true and yet an undisgusting picture of the Lazar House, seemed more difficult still. Let the reader only conceive how it was possible to per-

sonate these lines without offending against the proprieties of pictorial composition.

“ Immediately a place  
 Before his eyes appear'd, sad, noisome, dark;  
 A Lazar House it seem'd; wherein were laid  
 Numbers of all diseased; all maladies  
 Of ghastly spasm, or racking tortures; qualms  
 Of heart-sick agony; all feverous kinds;  
 Convulsions, epilepsies, fierce catarrhs;  
 Intestine stone and ulcer; colic pangs;  
 Demonic phrenzy, moping melancholy,  
 And moonstruck madness; pining atrophy,  
 Marasmus, and wide-wasting pestilence;  
 Dropsies and asthmas, and joint-racking rheums.  
 Dire was the tossing, deep the groans; Despair  
 Tended the sick, busied from couch to couch,  
 And over them triumphant Death his dart  
 Shook, but delayed to strike.”

Fuseli has omitted Despair—Demonic phrenzy is one of the most pathetic imaginings of the painter. This fine picture, together with the Bridging of Chaos, is in the gallery of Lord Guildford.

“ The Night-Hag” is another noble effort of imagination—it embodies these grand lines:

“ Nor uglier follow the Night-Hag, when, called  
 In secret, riding through the air, she comes,  
 Lured with the smell of infant blood, to dance  
 With Lapland witches, while the labouring moon  
 Eclipses at their charms.”

In this picture Fuseli may almost be said to have equalled his author; yet it remained long on his hands. In 1808, when Mr. Knowles bought it, Fuseli looked earnestly at him, and said, “ Young man, the picture you have purchased is one of my

very best—yet no one has asked its price till now—it requires a poetic mind to feel and love such a work."

In a pecuniary point of view these pieces were unproductive; but the praise which the attempt and much of the execution obtained gratified the painter, nor was he unwilling to believe, that, like the poem which they embellished, they would have but an age of oblivion and many centuries of light. They were all visible, he said, to his fancy before he painted them. He pondered over the poet till he was fully possessed with the character of the scene; the figures which belonged to it appeared as it were in a vision: but he nevertheless complained of the splendour in which his fancy invested them, and declared that he could not paint up to his imagination. In comparing those splendid fictions with living nature, he was struck, he often said, with the lamentable deficiencies of the latter; yet conscious that by nature he must be tried and judged, he was heard to exclaim in a fit of peevishness, " Damn Nature!—she always puts me out." He had sometimes the curiosity to walk into the Milton Gallery after it was opened to the public, and as it was never very crowded, he could look at his works without much fear of interruption. One day a visitor accosted him, mistaking him for the keeper—" Those paintings, Sir, are from Paradise Lost I hear, and Paradise Lost was written by Milton—I have never read the poem, but I shall read it now." " I would not advise you, Sir," said the sarcastic artist, "*you* will find it an exceedingly tough job." In the original sketch of the guardian angels forsaking our first parents

after the fall, they were represented rising on wings. He looked earnestly at his sketch, and exclaimed—for he generally thought aloud—“They *shall* rise without wings.” He tried and succeeded.

Fears of a pecuniary nature pressed not a little on Fuseli while he laboured in the Milton Gallery. From these he was relieved by a stedfast friend—Mr. Coutts—who aided him while in Rome and forsook him not in any of his after difficulties. The grateful painter once waited on the banker and said, “I have finished the best of all my works—the Lazar House—when shall I send it home?” “My friend,” said Coutts, “for me to take this picture would be a fraud upon you and upon the world. I have no place in which it could be fitly seen. Sell it to some one who has a gallery—your kind offer of it is sufficient for me, and makes all matters straight between us.” For a period of sixty years that worthy man was the unchangeable friend of the painter. The apprehensions which the latter entertained of poverty were frequently without cause, and Coutts on such occasions has been known to assume a serious look and talk of scarcity of cash and of sufficient securities. Away flew Fuseli, muttering oaths and cursing all parsimonious men, and having found a friend, returned with him breathless, saying, “There! I stop your mouth with a security.” The cheque for the sum required was given, the security refused, and the painter pulled his hat over his eyes.

“To hide the tear that fain would fall”—  
and went on his way.

Before he commenced his labours in the Milton Gallery, he obtained the friendship of the poet Cowper. This was brought about by their sympathy of admiration for Homer. He, we have already said, was one of the gods whom Fuseli worshipped, while on our English poets, with the exception of Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton, he looked with indifference or contempt. But when the author of the Task laid his hand on Homer, in 1784, he rose suddenly in the estimation of Fuseli. To offer incense to his chief idol was a proof at once of belief and taste, and the learned artist volunteered to correct some passages where the translator, as he imagined, had erred in the sense, and to lend him light in other parts which the commentators had left obscure. That he was equal to all this there can be little doubt, since Cowper says so. "I am very sensibly obliged,"—he thus writes to his bookseller, in 1790—"by the remarks of Mr. Fuseli, and I beg that you will tell him so: they afford me opportunities of improvement which I shall not neglect. When he shall see the press copy he will be convinced of this, and will be convinced, likewise, that smart as he sometimes is, he spares me often when I have no mercy on myself."

In another letter the poet bestows higher praise on his critic. "My translation, (he says,) fast as it proceeds, passes under the observation of a most accurate discerner of all blemishes. I know not whether I told you before or now tell you for the first time, that I am in the hands of a most extraordinary person. He is intimate with my bookseller and voluntarily offered his service. I was

at first doubtful whether to accept it or not ; but finding that my friends were not to be satisfied on any other terms, though myself a perfect stranger to the man and his qualifications, except as he was recommended by Johnson, I at length consented, and have since found reason to rejoice that I did. I called him an extraordinary person, and such he is ; for he is not only correct in Homer and accurate in his knowledge of the Greek to a degree that entitles him to that appellation, but though a foreigner, is a perfect master of our language and has exquisite taste in English poetry." Praise from a man so wise and conscientious as Cowper is entitled to every respect.

Examples of his critical sagacity and specimens of his nice perception of the meaning of Homer, might readily be quoted, for Cowper has affixed Fuseli's initials to all the emendations which he adopted. There is a strong poetic sensibility in many of his corrections ; and the learned are agreed that sound scholarship pervades them all. "By his assistance," says Cowper, with his customary openness, "I have improved many passages,\* supplied many oversights, and corrected many mistakes—such as will of course escape the most diligent and attentive labourer in such a work. I ought to add, because it is the best

\* To give a single example—the second line in the following passage, describing Hector and his warriors, in the thirteenth Book of the Iliad, was supplied by Fuseli.

. . . . . " Spear crowded spear,  
*Shield, helmet, man, pressed helmet, man, and shield :*  
 The hairy crests of their resplendent casques  
 Kiss'd close at every nod."

assurance of his zeal and fidelity, that he does not toil for hire, nor will accept of any premium, but has entered upon the business merely for his amusement." In literature as well as in art, Fuseli was a thorough enthusiast—the love of mere *amusement* had no charms for him any more than the desire of gain—he was a slave to his love of fame, and a slave to nothing else. His voluntary labours on Homer extended over a space of five years.

Though Fuseli was accustomed to express sovereign contempt for all that artists know by the name of commissions, he had been prevailed upon by an offer of two hundred and fifty pounds to make drawings for a large edition of Shakespeare. Of this backsliding he never failed to speak with sorrow and scorn; he conceived commissions to be injurious to art, and to take away much of the inspiration which must or should be felt in the creation of works of true genius. His illustrations of Shakespeare, however, are not less clever than strange. They are full of poetical feeling and more than poetical wildness. The observance of nature and the barbarism of dress were constantly in his way, and in his attempts to escape from the fetters of costume he cuts very curious capers. Orlando in the Forest is a striking example—he is demanding food for his famishing companion, his posture is ludicrously extravagant, and his dress fits so close, that were it not for the projecting selvages of his pantaloons, he would not appear to live in a land of civilization and tailors.

Nor was Fuseli much more sedate in the action of his designs, when a graver work demanded his

pencil—he furnished sketches for the Bible, published in sixpenny numbers, and joined Richard Westall in illustrating a splendid edition of the New Testament. This too was a commission ; whatever resembled trade hurt the sensitive nature of Fuseli : for the excellence of the work take his own words. “ *We* made pictures for the New Testament—there was only one good one among them all, and I suspect I painted it ; but Richard may have the merit if he likes, for it was not much.” The *ci-devant* friend of Miss Wolstonecraft was no scoffer at revelation, nor would he suffer any one in his presence to call it in question ; he was, in fact, too full of feeling not to reverence his Bible, and he was at all times difficult to please with modern attempts to embody Scripture. When Northcote exhibited his judgment of Solomon, Fuseli looked at it with a sarcastic smirk on his face. “ How do you like my picture ?” inquired Northcote. “ Much ” was the answer—“ the action suits the word—Solomon holds out his fingers like a pair of open scissors at the child, and says, ‘ Cut it.’—I like it much !” Northcote remembered this when Fuseli exhibited a picture representing Hercules drawing his arrow at Pluto. “ How do you like my picture ?” inquired Fuseli. “ Much !” said Northcote—“ it is clever, very clever, but he’ll never hit him.” “ He shall hit him,” exclaimed the other, “ and that speedily.” Away ran Fuseli with his brush, and as he laboured to give the arrow the true direction, was heard to mutter, “ Hit him !—by Jupiter, but he shall hit him !”

His reverence for Homer and regard for Cowper

induced him, on the appearance of the *Iliad* in 1793, to write a criticism upon it in the *Analytical Review*, a work which was favoured with many contributions from his pen—on natural history, classical learning, and the fine arts. It was not easy indeed to translate up to Fuseli's notion of Homer; and Cowper comprehended him fully when he read his critique. “I am happy,” said that modest and devout poet, “to have fallen into the hands of a critic rigorous enough indeed, but a scholar and a man of sense, and who does not deliberately intend me mischief. I am better pleased indeed that he censures some things, than I should have been to be treated with unmixed commendation; for his censure, to use the new diplomatic term, will accredit his praise. In his particular remarks he is for the most part right, and I shall be the better for them, but in his general ones I think he asserts too largely and more than he could prove. The critic, by the way, is Fuseli—I know him by infallible indications.” It was not easy to mistake the hand of one who took such singular liberties occasionally with the English language. The observations in this criticism were sometimes profound, often sagacious, and occasionally sarcastic.

It pleased Fuseli to be thought one of those erudite gentlemen whom the poet describes—

Far seen in Greek—deep men of letters;

and he loved to annoy certain of his companions with the display of his antique lore. He sometimes composed Greek verses in the emergency of the moment, and affected to forget the name of the author. He once repeated half-a-dozen sonorous

and well-sounding lines to Porson, and said “ With all your learning now you cannot tell me who wrote that.” The Professor, “ much renowned for Greek,” confessed his ignorance, and said “ I don’t know him.” “ How the devil could you know him?” chuckled Fuseli—“ I made them this moment.” When thwarted in the Academy, and that was not seldom, his wrath aired itself in a polyglott. “ It is a pleasant thing and an advantageous,” said the painter, on one of those occasions, “ to be learned. I can speak Greek, Latin, French, English, German, Danish, Dutch, and Spanish, and so let my folly or my fury get vent through eight different avenues.”

Many sarcastic remarks were uttered and more written on the wild insobriety of his productions, and as he was not spared himself, neither did he spare others. His vanity was galled, not wounded, by the random strictures of criticism; and his reign at the table of Johnson, the bookseller, where he appeared weekly, was sometimes rendered uneasy by the satire of Wolcot, to whom the oddities of the artist presented a broad mark. But it was impossible to dethrone him. He had reigned there forty years, adorning the society by his learning and enlivening it with his wit, and in both he was a match for any of the distinguished men, and those were not few, whom it was his fortune to encounter.

When Barry lost the professorship of painting, in the year 1799, it was bestowed with acclamation on Fuseli, and as his mind was overflowing with knowledge of all kinds, he found little difficulty and much pleasure in fulfilling the duties of

his new station. During his professorship he delivered nine lectures; of which the following six only are printed—on ancient art, modern art, invention, composition, expression, and chiaroscuro. The first three are the best. In them he has poured out learning, observation, and feeling with a lavish hand, and there is an original power in his diction, such as no man has exhibited before or since in a language not his own. The first three lectures were delivered in 1801, the crowds who went to hear them were great, and their cheers vehement. His disquisition upon Invention has been deservedly admired. It is difficult to select a single passage which will give a sufficient notion of the author's original grasp of mind.

“Form, in its widest meaning, the visible universe that envelopes our senses, and its counterpart, the invisible one, that agitates our mind with visions bred on sense by fancy, are the element and realm of invention: it discovers, selects, combines the possible, the probable, the known, in a mode that strikes with an air of truth and novelty. Possible, strictly, means an effect derived from a cause, a body composed of materials, a coalition of forms whose union or co-agency imply in themselves no absurdity, no contradiction: applied to our art, it takes a wider latitude; it means the representation of effects derived from causes, or forms compounded from materials heterogeneous and incompatible among themselves, but rendered so plausible to our senses, that the transition of one part to another seems to be accounted for by an air of organization, and the eye glides imperceptibly, or with satisfaction, from one to the other,

or over the whole : that this was the condition on which, and the limits within which, the ancients permitted invention to represent what was strictly speaking impossible, we may with plausibility surmise from the picture of Zeuxis, described by Lucian in the memoir to which he has prefixed that painter's name, who was probably one of the first adventurers in this species of imagery. Zeuxis had painted a family of Centaurs : the dam, a beautiful female to the middle, with the lower parts gradually sliding into the most exquisite forms of a young Thessalian mare, half reclined in playful repose, and gently pawing the velvet ground, offered her human nipple to one infant centaur, whilst another greedily sucked the feline udder below, but both with their eyes turned up to a lion whelp held over them by the male centaur, their father, rising above the hillock on which the female reclined, a grim feature, but whose ferocity was somewhat tempered by a smile.

" This picture the artist exhibited, expecting that justice from the penetration of the public which the genius deserved that taught him to give plausibility to a compound of heterogeneous forms, to inspire them with suitable soul, and to imitate the laws of existence ; he was mistaken. The novelty of the conceit eclipsed the art that had embodied it ; the artist was absorbed in his subject, and the unbounded praise bestowed was that of idle restless curiosity gratified. Sick of gods and goddesses, of demigods and pure human combinations, the Athenians panted only for what was new. The artist, as haughty as irritable, ordered his picture to be withdrawn. ' Cover it, Micchio,'

said he to his attendant, ‘ cover it, and carry it home, for this mob stick only to the clay of our art.’ Such were the limits set to invention by the ancients : secure within these it defied the ridicule thrown on that grotesque conglutination which Horace exposes : guarded by these, their mythology scattered its metamorphoses, made every element its tributary, and transmitted the privilege to us on equal conditions. Their Scylla and our Portress of Hell—their dæmons and our spectres—the shade of Patroclus and the ghost of Hamlet—their naiads, nymphs and oreads, and our sylphs, gnomes and fairies—their furies and our witches—differ less in essence than in local temporary social modifications : their common origin was fancy operating upon the materials of nature, assisted by legendary tradition and the curiosity implanted in us of diving into the invisible ; and they are suffered or invited to mix with or superintend real agency, in proportion to the analogy which we discover between them and ourselves. Pindar praises Homer less for that ‘ winged power’ which whirls incident on incident with such rapidity, that, absorbed by the whole and drawn from the impossibility of single parts, we swallow a tale too gross to be believed in a dream, than for the greater power by which he contrived to connect his imaginary creation with the realities of nature and human passions : without this, the fiction of the poet and the painter will leave us rather stupefied by its insolence than impressed by its power ; it will be considered only as a superior kind of legerdemain—an exertion of ingenuity to no adequate end.”

The chief aim of the new Professor was to impress on his audience a sense of the nobleness of art, and the high purposes to which alone it ought to be dedicated. With his own pencil he endeavoured to obey his own maxims, and the subjects which he painted were all in their nature poetical. Neither the advice of friends, the taunts of enemies, nor the offers of the wealthy, could induce him to descend farther down the scale of art. Like some of the old preachers, who, in their fierce sermons, ordered the profane and those who were not chosen, to rise and depart, he dismissed from his lecture-room all students with sordid minds, who looked upon art as the way to gain—and who had none of the fervour of natural genius. On those who made mere fac-similes of human life, or who painted new-mown meadows, or well-fed oxen, he had little mercy. He asserted in conversation, if not in lectures, that the Royal Academy robbed the plough and the shoemaker's stall of very meritorious persons, and that many came to the sculptor's chisel and the painter's pencil, who might have handled the joiner's plane or the tailor's scissors with greater advantage to the public and profit to themselves.

To support his theory of Invention, he was ready with illustration from ancient lore and the stores of an inexhaustible imagination. On one occasion he introduced the following happy quotation from Quintilian :—“ We give,” says that eminent Roman, “ the name of visions to what the Greeks call phantasies : that power by which the images of ancient things are represented by the mind with the energy of objects moving before

our eyes : he who conceives these rightly will be a master of passions ; his is that well-tempered fancy which can imagine things, voices, acts, as they really exist—a power, perhaps, in a great measure, dependent on our will. For if those images so pursue us when our minds are in a state of rest, or fondly fed by hope, or in a kind of waking dream ; that are seen to travel, to sail, to fight, to harangue in public, or disposes of riches we possess not, and all this with an air of reality, why should we not turn to account this view of the mind ? Suppose I am to plead the case of a murdered man, why should not every supposable circumstance of the act float before my eyes ? Shall I not see the murderer, unawares, rush in upon him—in vain he tries to escape—see how pale he turns—hear you not his shrieks—his entreaties ? —do you not see him flying, struck, falling ? Will not his blood, his ashy semblance, his groans, his last expiring gasp, seize on every mind ? ”

“ By this radiant recollection of associated ideas,” continues Fuseli, “ the spontaneous ebullitions of nature, selected by observation, treasured by memory, classed by sensibility and judgment, Shakespeare became the supreme master of passions and the ruler of our hearts : this embodied his Falstaff and his Shylock—Hamlet and Lear—Juliet and Rosalind. By this power he saw Warwick uncover the corpse of Gloucester and swear to his assassination and his tugs for life : by this he made Banquo see the Weird Sisters bubble up from earth, and in their own air vanish : this is the hand that struck upon the bell when Macbeth’s drink was ready, and from her chamber

pushed his dreaming wife once more to methodize the murder of her guest :—and this was the power of Theon ; such was the unpremeditated conception which inspired him with the idea of that warrior, who, in the words of *Aelian*, seemed to embody the terrible graces and the enthusiastic furor of the God of War. Impetuous he rushed onward to oppose the sudden incursion of enemies—with shield thrown forward and high brandished falchion, his step, as he swept on, seemed to devour the ground ; his eye flashed defiance—you fancied to hear his voice—his looks denounce perdition and slaughter without mercy. His figure, single, and without other accompaniments of war than what the havoc of the distance showed, Theon deemed sufficient to answer the impression he intended to make on those whom he had selected to inspect it. He kept it covered till a trumpet, after a prelude of martial symphonies, at once by his command blew with an invigorated fierceness a signal of attack—the curtain dropped—the terrific figure appeared to start from the canvass, and irresistibly assailed the astonished eyes of the assembly.”

Not the least valuable parts of Fuseli’s lectures are those in which he, for the illustration of his own opinions, describes and compares particular works of the great masters. The Lecture on *Expression* (published in 1820) is especially rich in passages of this kind, nor perhaps has Vasari himself surpassed, even in his famous description of Giorgione’s St. Mark, the effect produced by the style of Fuseli in treating of the Samson of

Rembrandt, as contrasted with that of Julio Romano. The reader will not quarrel with the length of the following quotation.

"The gradations of expression within, close to, and beyond its limits, cannot perhaps be elucidated with greater perspicuity than by comparison; and the different moments which Julio Romano, Vandyke and Rembrandt, have selected to represent the subject of Samson betrayed by Delilah, offers one of the fairest specimens furnished by art. Considering it as a drama, we may say that Julio forms the plot, Vandyke unravels it, and Rembrandt shews the extreme of the catastrophe.

"In the composition of Julio, Samson, plunged into sleep, and stretched on the ground, rests his head and presses with his arm the thigh of Delilah on one side, whilst on the other a nimble minion, busily but with timorous caution, fingers and clips his locks: such is his fear, that, to be firm, he rests one knee on a footstool tremblingly watching the sleeper, and ready to escape at his least motion. Delilah, seated between both, fixed by the weight of Samson, warily turns her head toward a troop of warriors in the back ground; with the left arm stretched out she beckons their leader, with the finger of the right hand she presses her lip to enjoin silence and noiseless approach. The Herculean make and lion port of Samson, his perturbed though ponderous sleep, the quivering agility of the curled favourite employed, the harlot graces and meretricious elegance contrasted by equal firmness and sense of danger in Delilah, the attitude and look of the grim veteran who heads

the ambush, whilst they give us the clue to all that followed, keep us in anxious suspense—we palpitate in breathless expectation; this is the plot.

“The terrors which Julio made us forbode, Vandyke summons to our eyes. The mysterious lock is cut; the dreaded victim is roused from the lap of the harlot-priestess. Starting unconscious of his departed power, he attempts to spring forward, and with one effort of his mighty breast and expanded arms to dash his foes to the ground and fling the alarmed traitress from him—in vain, shorn of his strength, he is borne down by the weight of the mailed chief that throws himself upon him, and overpowered by a throng of infuriate satellites. But though overpowered, less aghast than indignant, his eye flashes reproach on the perfidious female whose wheedling caresses drew the fatal secret from his breast; the plot is unfolded, and what succeeds, too horrible for the sense, is left to fancy to brood upon, or drop it.

“This moment of horror the gigantic but barbarous genius of Rembrandt chose, and, without a metaphor, *executed* a subject, which humanity, judgment and taste taught his rivals, only to *treat*; he displays a scene which no eye but that of Domitian or Nero could wish or bear to see. Samson, stretched on the ground, is held by one Philistine under him, whilst another chains his right arm, and a third, clutching his beard with one, drives a dagger into his eye with the other hand. The pain that blasts him, darts expression—from the contortions of the mouth and his gnashing teeth, to the crampy convulsions of the leg dashed high into the air. Some fiend-like features glare

through the gloomy light which discovers Delilah, her work now done, sliding off, the shears in her left, the locks of Samson in her right hand. If her figure, elegant, attractive, such as Rembrandt never conceived before or after, deserve our wonder rather than our praise: no words can do justice to the expression that animates her face, and shows her less shrinking from the horrid scene, than exulting in being its cause. Such is the work, whose magic of colour, tone, and chiaroscuro, irresistibly entrap the eye, whilst we detest the brutal choice of the moment.

"Let us, in conclusion, contrast the stern pathos of this scenery with the placid emotions of a milder subject, in the celebrated pictures which represent the Communion or Death of St. Jerome, by Agostino Caracci, and his scholar, Domenichino, that an altar-piece in the Certosa, near Bologna, this in the church of St. Girolamo della Carità at Rome; but for some time both exhibited in the gallery of the Louvre at Paris. What I have to say on the invention, expression, characters, tone and colour of either, is the result of observations lately made on both in that gallery, where then they were placed nearly opposite to each other.

"In each picture, St. Jerome brought from his cell to receive the sacrament, is represented on his knees, supported by devout attendants; in each the officiating priest is in the act of administering to the dying saint; the same clerical society fills the portico of the temple in both; in both the scene is witnessed from above by infant angels.

"The general opinion is in favour of the pupil, but if in the economy of the whole Domenichino

surpasses his master, he appears to me greatly inferior both in the character and expression of the hero. Domenichino has represented Piety scarcely struggling with decay, Agostino triumphant over it: his saint becomes in the place where he is a superior being, and is inspired by the approaching god: that of Domenichino seems divided between resignation, mental and bodily imbecility, and desire. The saint of Agostino is a lion, that of Domenichino, a lamb.

" In the sacerdotal figure administering the viaticum, Domenichino has less improved than corrected the unworthy choice of his master. The priest of Agostino is one of the Frati Godenti of Dante; before they received the infernal hood; a gross, fat, self-conceited terrestrial feature, a countenance equally proof to elevation, pity or thought. The priest of Domenichino is a minister of grace, stamped with the sacred humility that characterized his master, and penetrated by the function of which he is the instrument.

" We are more impressed with the graces of youth than the energies of manhood verging on age: in this respect, as well as that of contrast with the decrepitude of St. Jerome, the placid contemplative beauty of the young deacon on the foreground of Domenichino, will probably please more, than the poetic trance of the assistant friar with the lighted taper in the foreground of Agostino. This must, however be observed, that as Domenichino thought proper to introduce supernatural witnesses of the ceremony in imitation of his master, their effect seems less ornamental and

more interwoven with the plan, by being perceived by the actors themselves.

“ If the attendant characters in the picture of Agostino are more numerous, and have on the whole furnished the hints of admission to those of Domenichino, this, with one exception, may be said to have used more propriety and judgment in the choice. Both have introduced a man with a turban, and opened a portico to characterize an Asiatic scene.

“ With regard to composition, Domenichino undoubtedly gains the palm. The disposition on the whole he owes to his master, though he reversed it; but he has cleared it of that oppressive bustle, which rather involves and crowds the principal actors in Agostino, than attends them. He spreads tranquillity with space, and repose without vacuity.

“ With this corresponds the tone of the whole. The evening freshness of an oriental day tinges every part; the medium of Agostino partakes too much of the fumigated inside of a Catholic chapel.

“ The draperies of both are characteristic and unite subordination with dignity, but their colour is chosen with more judgment by Domenichino, the imbrowned gold and ample folds of the robe of the administering priest are more genial than the cold blue, white and yellow on the priest of his master; in both, perhaps, the white draperies on the foreground figures have too little strength for the central colours, but it is more perceived in Caracci than in Domenichino.

“ The forms of the saint in Caracci are grander and more ideal than in the saint of Domenichino—

some have even thought them too vigorous : both, in my opinion, are in harmony with the emotion of the face and expression of either. The eagerness that animates the countenance of the one may be supposed to spread a momentary vigour over his frame. The mental dereliction of countenance in the other with equal propriety relaxes, and palsies, the limbs which depend on it.

“ The colour of Caracci’s saint is much more characteristic of fleshy though nearly bloodless substance, than that chosen by his rival, which is withered, shrivelled, leathery in the lights, and earthy in the shade ; but the head of the officiating priest in Domenichino, whether considered as a specimen of colour independent of the rest, or as set off by it, for truth, tone, freshness, energy, is not only the best Domenichino ever painted, but perhaps the best that can be conceived.”

He loved to say strong and daring things—to take poetic freedom with language, and to scatter snatches of character over his compositions, such as he hoped would sink into the reader’s mind by their satiric weight, or adhere to the memory because of their vividness and force. His character of Salvator Rosa is struck briefly and glowingly off ; perhaps he rates his merit too low—what “ Savage Rosa dashed” is as savagely treated. These are his words : “ The wildness of Salvator Rosa opposes a powerful contrast to the classic regularity of Poussin. Terrific and grand in his conceptions of inanimate nature, he was reduced to attempts at hiding by boldness of hand his inability of exhibiting her impassioned, or in the dignity of character : his line is vulgar ; his magic

visions, less founded on the principles of terror than on mythologic trash and caprice, are to the probable combinations of nature what the paroxysms of a fever are to the flights of a vigorous fancy. Though so much extolled, and so ambitiously imitated, his banditti are a medley made up of starveling models, shreds and bits of armour from his lumber-room brushed into notice by a daring pencil. Salvator was a satirist and a critic, but the rod which he had the insolence to lift against the nudities of Michael Angelo, and the anachronism of Raphael, would have been better employed in chastising his own misconceptions."

This is sufficiently severe; but the presumption of Salvator in lifting his hand against Michael, the throned god of Fuseli's idolatry, was not to be passed without some show of resentment. Rembrandt had not sinned in that sort; his character is drawn with equal vigour and with more of justice. "Rembrandt was in my opinion a genius of the first class in whatever relates not to form. In spite of the most portentous deformity, and without considering the spell of his chiaro-scuro, such were his powers of nature—such the grandeur, pathos, or simplicity of his composition, from the most elevated or extensive arrangement to the meanest and most homely—that the best cultivated eye, the purest sensibility, and the most refined taste dwell on them, equally enthralled. Shakespeare alone excepted, no one combined with so much transcendent excellence, so many, in all other men, unpardonable faults, and reconciled us to them. He possessed the full empire of light and shade, and of all the tints that float between

them: he tinged his pencil with equal success in the cool of dawn, in the noon-day ray, in the livid flash, in evanescent twilight, and rendered darkness visible. Though made to bend a stedfast eye on the bolder phenomena of nature, yet he knew how to follow her into her calmest abodes, give interest to insipidity or baldness, and pluck a flower in every desert. None ever like Rembrandt knew to improve an accident into a beauty, or give importance to a trifle. If ever he had a master he had no followers. Holland was not made to comprehend his power. The succeeding school of colourists were content to tip the cottage, the hamlet, the boor, the ale-pot, the shambles, and the haze of winter, with orient hues or the glow of setting summer suns."

Having bestowed so much admiration on the princes of the calling, he had little left for other and inferior spirits. Of the Massacre of the Innocents by Tintoretto, he says, with singular vigour, "The stormy brush of Tintoretto swept individual woe away in general masses. Two immense wings of light and shade divide the composition and hide the want of sentiment in tumult." He dismisses the names of our British artists in general words and with hasty abruptness. He was disposed to allow the claim of genius in a very moderate degree to few of his more immediate brethren—a high opinion of his own powers was impressed on all he said—he laboured hard with tongue, pen, and pencil, to make that superiority be felt, nor was he unwilling at any time to lower the reputation of his compeers by sarcastic sallies, ironical praises, and ludicrous comparisons.

He once called out, as the pictures were coming into the Academy for exhibition, "What pictures are come?" "Many—very many, sir," said the servant. "I know that, but whose are they?"—"There are, six landscapes, sir, by Mr. \_\_\_\_." "Oh, don't name him, I know whom you mean. Bring me my great coat and umbrella, and I'll go and see them." This was his way of pronouncing them cold and wintry looking works.

During the brief peace of 1802 Fuseli visited Paris, and saw, in common with thousands of his adopted countrymen, the well-filled galleries of Napoleon. He remained there so long that he collected materials for a dissertation on the subject, and on his return to London proceeded to arrange them. But the renewal of the war, or the apathy of his booksellers, discouraged him so effectually that he discontinued these labours, and employed his talents on a new edition of Pilkington's Dictionary of Painters. This work, which appeared in 1805, added little to the reputation of Fuseli. He introduced indeed about two hundred new artists as candidates for fame; but most of them were obscure, and their names were strange to the world. It was a sufficient claim, he seems to have thought, to this distinction that a painter had *tried* the historic style. On the other hand, he affected not to know the christian name of Gainsborough, though all the world knew it was Thomas; he was grossly unjust also to that elegant artist's merits; nay, such was his haughty bigotry that he classed the works of Hogarth among the daily vulgarities of common minds. His admiration of the eminent painters of historic or poetic

compositions was strained and exaggerated, and his contempt for those who sought to win fame by humbler works was still more out of harmony with the ordinary views and feelings of his readers.

Having conceived an affection for the poetry of Gray—which, however, was confined chiefly to the translations—he painted *The Bard*, *The Descent of Odin*, and *The Fatal Sisters*. He was fond indeed of the wild mythology of the Scandinavians, and numerous traces of the impression which it had made on his mind might be pointed out in his paintings and in his sketches. His “*Thor battering the Serpent*” was such a favourite that he presented it to the Royal Academy as his admission gift. With quiet beauty and serene grace he knew not well how to begin; the hurrying measures, the crowding epithets, and startling imagery of the northern poetry suited the intoxicated fancy of Fuseli. Such was his love of terrific subjects, that he was known among his brethren by the name of *Painter in ordinary to the Devil*, and he smiled when some one officiously told him of this, and said, “Aye! he has sat to me many times.” Once, at Johnson the bookseller’s table, one of the guests said, “Mr. Fuseli, I have purchased a picture of your’s.”—“Have you, Sir; what is the subject?” “Subject? really I don’t know.”—“That’s odd; you must be a strange fellow to buy a picture without knowing the subject.” “I bought it, Sir, that’s enough—I don’t know what the *devil* it is.”—“Perhaps it is the devil,” replied Fuseli, “I have often painted him.” On this one of the company, to arrest a conversation

which was growing warm, said, "Fuseli, there is a member of your Academy who has strange looks—and he chooses as strange subjects as you do." "Sir," exclaimed the Professor, "he paints nothing but thieves and murderers, and when he wants a model he looks in the glass."

Fuseli was sudden in his resentments and sometimes severe in his revenge. He had sketched a picture of Miranda and Prospero from the *Tempest*, and was considering of what dimensions he should make the finished painting, when he was told that Lawrence had sent in for exhibition a picture on the same subject and with the same figures. His wrath knew no bounds. "This comes," he cried, "of my blasted simplicity in showing my sketches—never mind—I'll teach the face-painter to meddle with my Prospero and Miranda." He had no canvas prepared—he took a finished picture, and over the old performance dashed in hastily, in one laborious day, a wondrous scene from the *Tempest*—hung it in the exhibition right opposite that of Lawrence, and called it "a sketch for a large picture." Sir Thomas said little, but thought much—he never afterwards, I have heard, exhibited a poetic subject.

On the death of Wilton the sculptor, Fuseli became Keeper of the Royal Academy, and removed from Berners Street, where he had lived some two years, to his rooms in Somerset House. This situation—due alike to his great merits and to his declining years, was not supposed to be unwelcome in a pecuniary point of view; it provided a pleasant residence and a respectable salary, and

placed for ever above want one who, by his learning and the poetic character of his works, had done much honour to the Academy. A bye-law obliged him to resign the Professorship, which he regained on the death of Opie, and thenceforth filled both situations with honour to himself and to the institution. The enthusiasm of his nature, his foreign pronunciation, the massy vigour of his language, and the sharp acidity of his wit, were not wasted on empty walls,—the lecture-room was commonly full.

He was also on the whole liked as Keeper. It is true that he was often satiric and severe on the students—that he defaced their drawings by corrections which, compared to their weak and trembling lines, seemed traced by a tar-mop, and that he called them tailors and bakers, and vowed that there was more genius in the *claw* of one of Michael Angelo's eagles than in all the *heads* with which the Academy was swarming. The youths on whom this tempest of invective fell smiled—and the Keeper, pleased by submission, walked up to each easel—whispered a word of advice confidentially, and retired in peace to enjoy the company of his Homer, Michael Angelo, Dante, and Milton.

He was an unwilling listener to the praise of any painter out of the true historic school. He mentioned Reynolds in his lectures as a great portrait painter and no more; and one evening in company, when Sir Thomas Lawrence was dis coursing on what he called the historic grandeur of Sir Joshua, and contrasting him with Titian and with Raphael, Fuseli kindled up: “ Blastation !

you will drive me mad—Reynolds and Raphael!—a dwarf and a giant!—why will you waste all your fine words!” He rose and left the room, muttering something about a tempest in a pint pot. Lawrence followed,—soothed him, and brought him back. These two eminent men loved one another. The Keeper had no wish to give permanent offence, and the President had as little desire to be on ill terms with one so bitter and so satirical. They were often together; and I have heard Sir Thomas say, that he never had a dispute with Fuseli save once—and that was concerning their pictures of Satan. Indeed, the Keeper, both with tongue and pen, took pleasure in pointing out the excellencies of his friend, nor was he blind to his defects. “This young man,” thus he wrote in one of his early criticisms, “would do well to look at nature again; his flesh is too glassy.” Lawrence showed his sense of his monitor’s accuracy by following the advice. When Lawrence had risen into reputation and had money at command, he said, laying his hand upon one of Fuseli’s sketches, “make me a painting of this fine subject, and I will give you the price of one of my best paintings.” “The fit is off me for this subject,” said Fuseli, “I wish you would choose some other.” He was unwilling to paint to the suggestion of others, and he perhaps disliked the idea of having his poetic painting paid by the price of a portrait.

The students found a constant source of amusement in his oddities, his jests, and the strong biting wit which he had ever at their service. They were fond of repeating his jokes. He heard a

violent altercation in the studio one day, and inquired the cause. "It is only those fellows, the students, Sir," said one of the porters. "Fellows!" exclaimed Fuseli, "I would have you to know, Sir, that those *fellows* may one day become academicians." The noise increased—he opened the door and burst in upon them, exclaiming "You are a den of damned wild beasts." One of the offenders, Munro by name, bowed and said, "and Fuseli is our Keeper." He retired smiling, and muttering "the fellows are growing witty." Another time he saw a figure from which the students were making drawings lying broken to pieces. "Now who the devil has done this?"—"Mr. Medland," said an officious probationer, "he jumped over the rail and broke it." He walked up to the offender—all listened for the storm. He calmly said, "Mr. Medland, you are fond of jumping—go to Sadler's Wells—it is the best academy in the world for improving agility." A student as he passed held up his drawing, and said confidently, "Here, Sir—I finished it without using a crumb of bread." "All the worse for your drawing," replied Fuseli, "buy a two-penny loaf and rub it out." "What do you see, Sir?" he said one day to a student, who, with his pencil in his hand and his drawing before him, was gazing into vacancy. "Nothing, Sir?" was the answer. "Nothing, young man," said the Keeper emphatically, "then I tell you that you ought to *see something*—you ought to see distinctly the true image of what you are trying to draw. I see the vision of all I paint—and I wish to heaven I could paint up to what I see."

With wit at command, and willingness to let it

be felt, he had nevertheless many friends, and among them we must number the students of the Royal Academy. Those of the year 1807 presented him with a silver vase, designed by one whom he loved—Flaxman the sculptor: he received it very graciously. Ten years afterwards he was presented with the diploma of the first class in the Roman Academy of St. Luke.

He reserved a little of his wit and satire for his elder brethren of the easel and the modelling stool. He had aided Northcote and Opie in obtaining admission into the Academy, and when he desired some station for himself, he naturally expected their assistance—they voted against him, and next morning went together to his house to offer an explanation. He saw them coming—he opened the door as they were scraping their shoes, and said, “Come in—come in—for the love of heaven come in, else you will ruin me entirely.”—“How so?” cried Opie. “Marry, thus,” replied the other, “my neighbours over the way will see you, and say, ‘Fuseli’s *done*—for there’s a bum-bailiff,’ he looked at Opie, ‘going to seize his person; and a little Jew broker,’ he looked at Northcote, ‘going to take his furniture’—so come in I tell you—come in!” On Northcote especially he loved to exercise some of the malevolence of rival wit. He looked on his friend’s painting of the angel meeting Balaam and his ass. “How do you like it?” said the painter. “Vastly, Northcote,” said Fuseli, “you are an angel at an ass—but an ass at an angel.” A person who desired to speak to the Keeper of the Academy, followed so close on the porter, whose business it was to in-

troduce him, that he announced himself with an expression which the inimitable Liston has since rendered proverbial, "I hope I don't intrude."—"You do intrude," said Fuseli, in a surly tone, "Do I?" said the visitor; "then, Sir, I will come to-morrow, if you please." "No, Sir," replied he, "don't come to-morrow, for then you will intrude a second time: tell me your business now."

Fuseli spared no one: on Nollekens he was often very merciless; he disliked him for his close and parsimonious nature, and rarely failed to hit him under the fifth rib. Once at the table of Mr. Coutts the banker, Mrs. Coutts, dressed like Morgiana, came dancing in presenting her dagger at every breast: as she confronted the sculptor, Fuseli called out, "Strike—strike—there's no fear; Nolly was never known to bleed." When Blake, a man infinitely more wild in conception than Fuseli himself, showed him one of his strange productions, he said, "Now some one has told you this is very fine."—"Yes," said Blake, "the Virgin Mary appeared to me, and told me it was very fine: what can you say to that?"—"Say?" exclaimed Fuseli, "why nothing—only her ladyship has not an immaculate taste."

From 1817 to 1825, Fuseli exhibited at the Academy a dozen of pictures, and neither the fervour of his fancy nor his skill of hand had failed him in the least. Of his twelve last pictures, six were received with much approbation—Perseus starting from the cave of the Gorgons—the Lady and the Infernal Knight in Theodore and Honorio—Dante descending into Hell discovers in a whirlwind the forms of Paolo and Francesca—an In-

cantation from *Theocritus*—Theseus, Ariadne, and the Minotaur—and *Comus* from *Milton*. These works attest his love of poetic art, and his resolution to die as he had lived—in the service of the loftier Muses.

Fuseli was wise in calling in the graver to the aid of his fame. His exquisite outline was preserved, his wild colouring, which startled thousands, concealed, and the ruling sentiment exhibited in all its perfection. This was performed for him by the hand of Moses Haughton—an artist skilful alike with graver and pencil, and as the engravings were all made under the eye of Fuseli himself they are much in request with collectors, and rarer than I could wish them to be. Of these the Lazar House—Satan aroused from the ear of Eve—Hamlet's Ghost—the Midsummer Night's Dream—and that fine one the

“ Goddess fair and free,  
In heaven ycleped Euphrosyne,  
And by men, heart-easing Mirth”—

are the best specimens, and those who have the good fortune to possess them are enabled to see Fuseli in some of his highest moods.

He had the art of acquiring friends and the rarer art of retaining them. To the names of Cadell and Boydell and Armstrong, his first and intimate companions, he added many more as he increased in years; and in naming those who purchased his works, we name the chief patrons of the poetic style of painting. Roscoe, the elegant author of the life of Leo the Tenth, bought eleven—Wood Mason purchased four—Sir Robert

Smythe became proprietor of several—six went to the gallery of Mr. Locke of Newbury Park—two were purchased by Sir Brooke Boothby—as many by the late Lord de Tabley—Graham Moore and Carrick Moore, brothers of Sir John Moore, commissioned several. Mr. Knowles increased his collection to a dozen, and the Earl of Guildford, a kind and constant friend, became proprietor of forty. He exhibited in all some seventy pictures—but he painted several hundreds, and those are scattered through many collections. One of great merit—*Paulo and Francesco*—is honourably placed in the gallery of Sir Thomas Lawrence; and another singularly wild and beautiful piece is in the keeping of one who feels its worth, Mr. Wainwright.

The wit of Fuseli was ever ready, and flowed freely out for the pleasure or the annoyance of all who visited him, whether friends or strangers. So much did it abound that the man who was in his company but once was sure to hear something worthy of being remembered for the rest of his life. I have already given specimens not a few—one who studied under him in the Academy has enabled me to relate a few more—I shall set them down at random, for the periods at which some of them were uttered are uncertain.

One day, during varnishing time in the exhibition, an eminent portrait painter was at work on the hand of one of his pictures; he turned to the Keeper, who was near him, and said, “Fuseli—Michael Angelo never painted such a hand.”—“No, by Pluto,” replied the other, “but you have, many.” He had an inherent dislike to Opie; and

some one, to please Fuseli, said, in allusion to the low characters in the historical pictures of the Death of James the First of Scotland and the murder of David Rizzio, that Opie could paint nothing but vulgarity and dirt. "If he paints nothing but dirt," said Fuseli, "he paints it like an angel." He was probably pleased to see the head of his enemy Wolcot figuring away on the shoulders of an assassin in the Death of the Royal Poet. One day a painter, who had been a student during the keepership of Wilton, called and said, "The students, Sir, don't draw so well now as they did under Joe Wilton." "Very true," replied Fuseli, "any body may draw here, let them draw ever so bad—you may draw here if you please!"

During the delivery of one of his lectures, wherein he calls landscape painters the topographers of art, Beechey admonished Turner with his elbow of the severity of the sarcasm; presently when Fuseli described the patrons of portrait painting as men who would give a few guineas to have their own senseless heads painted, and then assume the air and use the language of patrons, Turner administered a similar hint to Beechey. When the lecture was over Beechey walked up to Fuseli, and said, "How sharply you have been cutting up us poor labourers in portraiture!" "Not you, Sir William," exclaimed the professor, "I only spoke of the blasted fools who employ you!" A man of some station in society, and who considered himself a powerful patron in art, said at a public dinner where he was charmed with Fuseli's conversation, "If ever you come my way, Fuseli, I shall be happy to see you." "I thank you," replied

the painter, “but I never go your way—I never even go down your street, though I often pass by the end of it.” He looked on a time at a serpent with its tail in its mouth, a common-place emblem of eternity, which was carved upon an exhibited monument. “It wont do, I tell you,” said Fuseli to the sculptor, “you must have something new.” The *something new* startled a man whose imagination was none of the brightest, and he said, “How shall I find something new?” “O, nothing so easy,” said Fuseli, “I’ll help you to it. When I went away to Rome I left two fat men cutting fat bacon in St. Martin’s Lane; in ten years time I returned, and found the two fat men cutting fat bacon still: twenty years more have passed, and there the two fat fellows cut the fat flitches the same as ever. Carve them! if they look not like an image of eternity I wot not what does.”

During the exhibition of his Milton Pictures he called at the banking-house of Mr. Coutts, saying he was going out of town for a few days, and wished to have some money in his pocket. “How much?” said one of the members of the firm. “How much!” said Fuseli, “why as much as twenty pounds; and as it is a large sum, and I don’t wish to take your establishment by surprise, I have called to give you a day’s notice of it!” “I thank you, Sir,” said the cashier, imitating Fuseli’s own tone of irony, “we shall be ready for you—but as the town is thin and money scarce with us, you will oblige me greatly by giving us a few orders to see your Milton Gallery—it will keep cash in our drawers and hinder your exhibi-

tion from being empty." Fuseli shook him heartily by the hand, cried, "Blastation! and you shall have the tickets with all my heart; I have had the opinion of the virtuosi, the dilettanti, the cognoscenti, and the nobles and the gentry on my pictures—and I want now the opinion of the blackguards. I shall send you and your friends a score of tickets, and thank you too for taking them."

His life, though not without disappointment, had been hitherto without sickness, and his spirits seemed inexhaustible, but old age had now come upon him and the end was drawing nigh. He had lived eighty years and upwards—enjoyed the world, and obtained no little distinction: nor was he insensible to the advantages which he had enjoyed. "I have been a happy man," he said, "for I have been always well, and always employed in doing what I liked;" a boast which few men of genius can make. When work with the pencil failed, he lifted the pen, and as he was ready and clever with both, he was never obliged to fill up unemployed time with jobs which he disliked.

He was an early riser and generally sat down to breakfast with a book upon entomology in his hand. He ate and read, and read and ate—regarding no one and speaking to no one. He was delicate and abstemious—and on gross feeders he often exercised the severity of his wit. Two meals a-day were all he ventured on—he always avoided supper—the story of his having supped on raw pork-chops that he might dream his picture of the Nightmare has no foundation. Indeed the dreams he delighted to relate were of the noblest kind, and consisted of galleries of the fairest pictures and statues, in which were walking the poets and

painters of old. Having finished breakfast and noted down some remarks on entomology, he went into his studio—painted till dinner time—dined hastily, if at home, and then resumed his labours, or else forgot himself over Homer, or Dante, or Shakespeare, or Milton, till midnight. He was subject to fits of despondency, and during the continuance of such moods he sat with his beloved book on entomology upon his knee—touched now and then the breakfast cup with his lips, and seemed resolutely bent on being unhappy. In periods such as these it was difficult to rouse him, and even dangerous. Mrs. Fuseli on such occasions ventured to become his monitress. “I know him well,” she said one morning to a friend who found him in one of his dark moods, “he will not come to himself till he is put into a passion—the storm then clears off and the man looks out serene.” “Oh no,” said her visiter, “let him alone for awhile—he will soon think rightly.” He was spared till next morning—he came to the breakfast-table in the same mood of mind. “Now I must try what I can do,” said his wife to the same friend whom she had consulted the day before; she now began to reason with her husband, and soothe and persuade him; he answered only by a forbidding look and a shrug of the shoulder. She then boldly snatched away his book and dauntlessly abode the storm. The storm was not long in coming—his own fiend rises up not more furiously from the side of Eve than did the painter. He glared on his friend and on his wife—uttered an imprecation deeper than I dare write—rushed up stairs and strode about his room in great agitation. In a little while

his steps grew more regular—he soon opened the door, and descended to his labours all smiles and good humour.

He was on a visit to the Countess of Guildford at Putney Hill, and having engaged to dine with Mr. Rogers the poet, along with Sir Thomas Lawrence and Mr. Ottley, was about to proceed to London, when he felt suddenly indisposed. Lady Guildford persuaded him to send an apology, which he wrote with reluctance—he went to bed, and grew worse and worse. Doctors Holland and Crichton, two skilful physicians, were called in—but nature, which had lasted long, was manifestly giving way, and all aid proved unavailing. Fuseli was perfectly calm and quite conscious of his situation. “My friend,” he said to Mr. Knowles, who hurried from London to see him, “I am going to that bourne whence no traveller returns.” He spoke with the same cheerful resignation and calmness to Lady Guildford and her accomplished daughters, who watched over him with much solicitude, and seemed uneasy and restless when Sir Thomas Lawrence, who admired and loved him, was away from his side. Early in the morning of the fifth day of his illness a fatal change in his looks was visible—he seemed aware of this—he looked anxiously round the room—said several times in a low and agitated voice, “is Lawrence come—is Lawrence come?” and then appeared to listen for the sound of the chariot wheels which brought his friend once a-day from London to his bed-side. He raised himself up a little—then sank down and died, on the 16th of April, 1825, in the 84th year of his age.

For the character of Henry Fuseli, personal and mental, I willingly transcribe the words of Lavater; they are less the offspring of his wild speculations in physiognomy than the settled convictions of his heart and mind; it is to be remembered that our artist and he were early and attached companions. “The curve which describes the profile in whole is obviously one of the most remarkable: it indicates an energetic character which spurns at the idea of trammels. The forehead, by its contours and position, is more suited to the poet than the thinker. I perceive in it more force than gentleness—the fire of imagination rather than the coolness of reason. The nose seems to be the seat of an intrepid genius. The mouth promises a spirit of application and precision, and yet it costs the original the greatest effort to give the finishing touch to the smallest piece. Any one may see, without my telling it, that this character is not destitute of ambition, and that the sense of his own merit escapes him not. It may also be suspected that he is subject to impetuous emotions, but will any one say that he loves with tenderness—with warmth to excess? Though capable of the greatest actions, to him the slightest complaisance is an effort. His imagination is ever aiming at the sublime and delighting itself with prodigies. Nature intended him for a great poet, a great painter, and a great orator—but, to borrow his own words, ‘inexorable fate does not always proportion the will to our powers; it sometimes assigns a copious proportion of will to minds whose faculties are very contracted, and frequently

associates with the greatest faculties a will feeble and impotent.'"

This, we must confess, is a shining but not very amiable character—a less theatrical description may not be unacceptable. Fuseli was of low stature—his frame slim, his forehead high, and his eyes piercing and brilliant. His look was proud, wrapt up in sarcastic—his movements were quick, and by an eager activity of manner he seemed desirous of occupying as much space as belonged to men of greater stature. His voice was loud and commanding—nor had he learned much of the art of winning his way by gentleness and persuasion—he was more anxious to say pointed and stinging things than solicitous about their accuracy; and he had much pleasure in mortifying his brethren of the easel with his wit and overwhelming them with his knowledge. He was too often morose and unamiable—habitually despising those who were not his friends, and not unapt to dislike even his best friends, if they retorted his wit, or defended themselves successfully against his satire. In dispute he was eager, fierce, unsparing, and frequently precipitated himself into angry discussions with the Council, which, however, always ended in peace and good humour—for he was as placable as passionate. On one occasion he flew into his own room in a storm of passion, and having cooled and come to himself, was desirous to return; the door was locked and the key gone; his fury overflowed all bounds. "Sam!" he shouted to the porter, "Sam Strowager, they have locked me in like a blasted wild beast—bring

crowbars and break open the door." The porter—a sagacious old man, who knew the trim of the Keeper—whispered through the keyhole, "Feel in your pocket, Sir, for the key!" He did so, and unlocking the door, with a loud laugh exclaimed, "What a fool—never mind—I'll to the Council, and soon show them they are greater asses than myself."

With all these impediments in the way of popularity, Fuseli was generally liked, and by none more than by the students who were so often made the objects of his satire. They were sensible that he was assiduous in instruction—that he was very learned and very skilful, and that he allowed no one else to take liberties with their conduct or their pursuits. He had a tact like that of inspiration in singling out the most intellectual of the pupils—he was the first to notice Lawrence, and at the very outset of Wilkie he predicted his future eminence. He was so near-sighted that he was obliged to retire from his easel to a distance and examine his labours by means of an opera glass, then return and retouch and retire again and look. This imperfection was seriously in his way to eminence, and helps to account for a certain hardness of anatomical detail visible even in his best works. His weakness of sight was well known, and one of the students in revenge for some satirical strictures, placed a bench in his way, over which he nearly fell. "Bless my soul," said the Keeper, "I must put spectacles upon my shins." This sally of wit saved him probably from falling into a passion.

Men interpreted Fuseli's frequent complaints of

want of encouragement in his art as tantamount to an acknowledgment of poverty. He became a member of the Academy at the urgent request of his wife, in order that she might be sure of forty pounds annually in case of his death; and the Royal Academy bestowed the Keepership upon him in order to avoid the reproach of permitting a man of his learning and genius to suffer from want in his old age. To the surprise of his executors and the astonishment of his brethren, he died comparatively rich. How he had contrived to hoard, no one could divine; the sums which he received for his paintings were not large; the earnings of his pen could be but moderate, and in his native land he inherited no patrimony. He lived at little expense it is true—but frugality cannot soon make six or seven thousand pounds out of a small income. I hesitate to mention, what I suspect is the truth, that opulent friends paid him more than he charged for his pictures, in the belief that such kindness was not unseasonable, and that Fuseli wanted the fortitude to confess that he had no real occasion for such benevolence.

As a painter, his merits are of no common order. He was no timid and creeping adventurer in the region of art, but a man peculiarly bold and daring—who rejoiced only in the vast, the wild, and the wonderful, and loved to measure himself with any subject, whether in the heaven above, the earth beneath, or the waters under the earth. The domestic and humble realities of life he considered unworthy of his pencil, and employed it only on those high or terrible themes where imagination may put forth all her strength, and fancy scatter all

her colours. He associated only with the demigods of verse, and roamed through Homer, and Dante, and Shakespeare, and Milton, in search of subjects worthy of his hand ; he loved to grapple with whatever he thought too weighty for others ; and assembling round him the dim shapes which imagination called readily forth, sat brooding over the chaos, and tried to bring the whole into order and beauty. He endeavoured anxiously to

“ Produce those permanent and perfect forms,  
Those characters of heroes and of gods,  
Which from the crude materials of the world  
His own high mind created.”

But poetry had invested them with a diviner pomp than Fuseli could command, and it was on these occasions that he complained of his inability to work up to the conceptions of his fancy. He had splendid dreams, but like those of Eve they were sometimes disturbed by a demon, and passed away for ever before he could embody them.

His main wish was to startle and astonish—it was his ambition to be called Fuseli the daring and the imaginative, the illustrator of Milton and Shakespeare, the rival of Michael Angelo. Out of the seventy exhibited paintings on which he reposed his hope of fame, not one can be called common-place—they are all poetical in their nature, and as poetically treated. Some twenty of these alarm, startle, and displease ; twenty more may come within the limits of common comprehension ; the third twenty are such as few men could produce, and deserve a place in the noblest collections ; while the remaining ten are equal in con-

ception to any thing that genius has hitherto produced, and second only in their execution to the true and recognised masterpieces of art. It cannot be denied, however, that a certain air of extravagance and a desire to stretch and strain is visible in most of his works. A common mind, having no sympathy with his soaring, perceives his defects at once, and ranks him with the wild and unsobey—a poetic mind will not allow the want of serenity and composure to extinguish the splendour of the conception; but whilst it notes the blemish, will feel the grandeur of the work. The approbation of high minds fixes the degree of fame to which genius of all degrees is entitled, and the name of Fuseli is safe.

His colouring is like his design, original; it has a kind of supernatural hue, which harmonizes with many of his subjects—the spirits of the other state and the hags of hell are steeped in a kind of kindred colour, which becomes their characters. His notion of colour suited the wildest of his subjects; and the hue of Satan and the lustre of Hamlet's Ghost are part of the imagination of those supernatural shapes. Yet original as his colouring is, and suitable to the scenes which it often embodies, it seems unnatural when applied to earthly flesh and blood, and communicates hues which belong to other worlds to the sons and daughters of Adam. It is to be praised rather than imitated, and would be out of harmony with subjects of common emotion and every-day life.

His sketches are very numerous, amounting to eight hundred, and show the varied knowledge and vigorous imagination of the man. He busied him-

self during his hours of leisure with making sketches and drawings from scenes which had occurred in his reading, or had arisen on his fancy ; in this manner he illustrated the whole range of poetry ancient and modern. Those who are only acquainted with Fuseli through his paintings know little of the extent of his genius ; they should see him in his designs and drawings, to feel his powers and know him rightly. The variety of those productions is truly wonderful, and their poetic feeling and historic grandeur more wonderful still. It is surprising too how little of that extravagance of posture and action which offends in his large paintings is present here ; they are for the most part uncommonly simple and serene performances.

Scattered amongst those sketches, we are sometimes startled by the appearance of a lady floating gracefully along in fashionable attire—her patches, paint, and jewels on—and armed for doing mischief amongst the sons of modern men. There is no attempt at caricature—they are fac-similes, and favourable ones, of existing life and fashion. Their presence amongst the works we have described jars upon our feelings—they are out of keeping with the poetic simplicity of their companions, and look as strange as court ladies would do taking the air with the Apollo and the dying Gladiator. They do, however, what the painter meant. They tell us how contemptible every thing is save natural elegance and simple grandeur, and that much which gives splendour to a ball or levee, will never mingle with what is lofty or lasting.

His love of the loose wit and free humour of the old writers of Italy and England was great ; as

he read them he chuckled with pleasure, and taking up his pencil lent form to such scenes as gladdened his fancy. Those works are entitled to the praise of poetic freedom and vivacity—the humour and the wit triumph over all other levities—and sense has generally the better of sensuality. Fire, however, fell amongst most of these when he died—nor do I blame the hand of his widow who kindled it.

We cannot contemplate the portfolios of his serious drawings, opened to us by their possessor, Sir Thomas Lawrence,\* without being struck with the extraordinary genius of Fuseli, and lamenting the blindness and deficiency of taste of the age in which he lived. Had he received any thing like adequate encouragement, public feeling would have awed down his extravagance of imagination, and those compositions, now consigned to the cabinet of his eminent friend, would have been expanded into pictures and adorning the galleries of our country. Of all the painters whom this country has encouraged—they are not indeed many—no one had either the reach of thought or the poetic feeling of Fuseli—he had comprehension for all that is great, and imagination for all that is lofty.

Of his literary compositions something more should be said—I rank them high, and yet considerably below the efforts of his pencil. He affected to strike out remarkable sentences and express characters by a few weighty words—to

\* This kind and generous man is now lost to us. His life, if the author be spared to complete another volume of this work, will be included.

utter instructions pointed and oracular ; to season sound counsel with shrewd wit, and by the use of poetic diction give warmth and energy to the whole. To accomplish this, generally, required a better disciplined mind, and perhaps a better acquaintance with our language than he possessed ; but in many passages his success is splendid. He always feels well—often deeply ; but the great fault is that he seldom allows the stream of his mind to run smoothly along ; he leads it astray into artificial falls, and bewilders it in links and serpentines. He had such a high opinion of his own acuteness and wisdom, that he wrote a whole volume of Aphorisms on Art—three hundred in number ; some of these are said to be acute—some sensible—some profound, and a great many visionary. He also began a regular history of his art, but stopped at Michael Angelo. The fragment is yet unpublished.

END OF VOL. II.



UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



3 9015 02246 8766

A 766,983

